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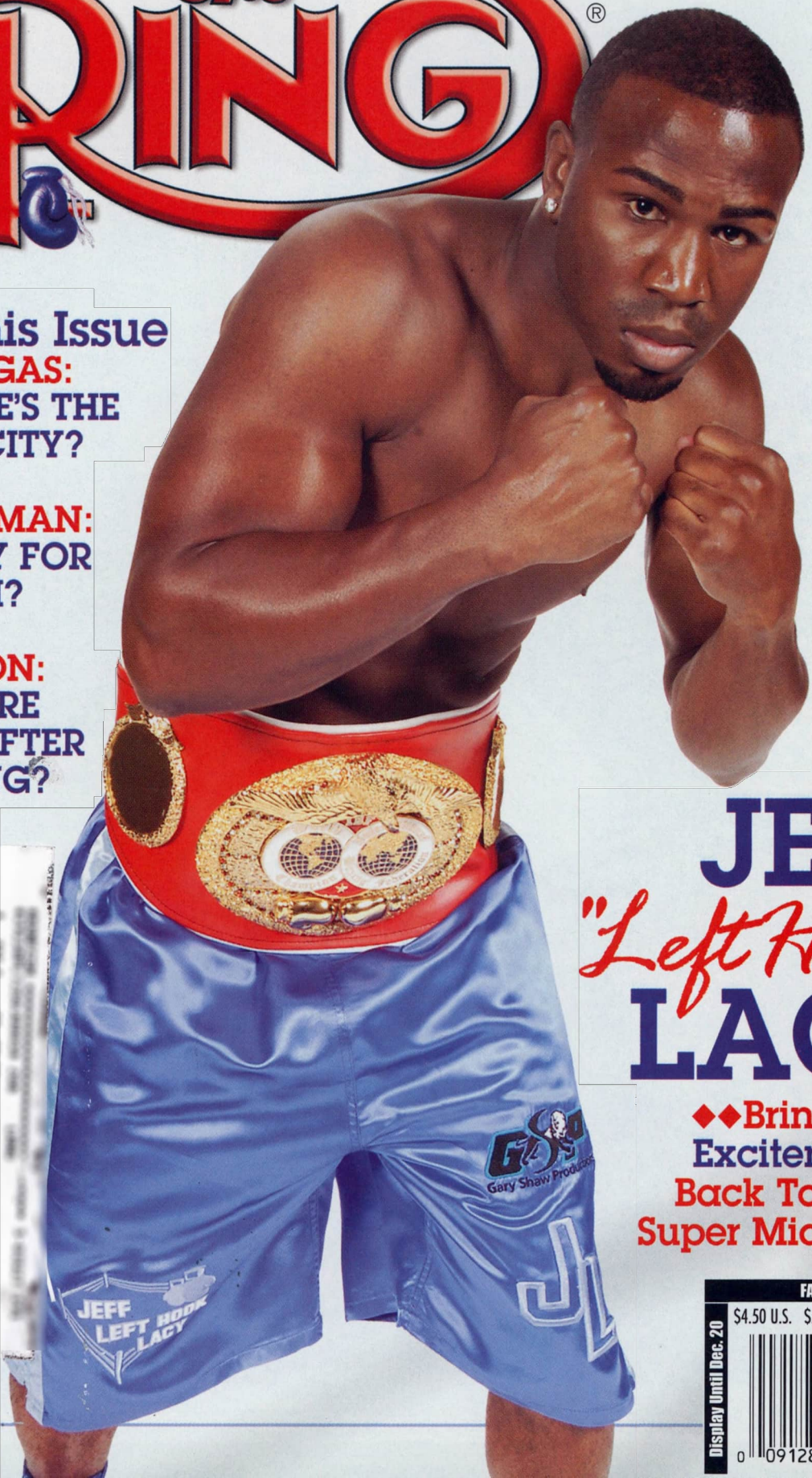

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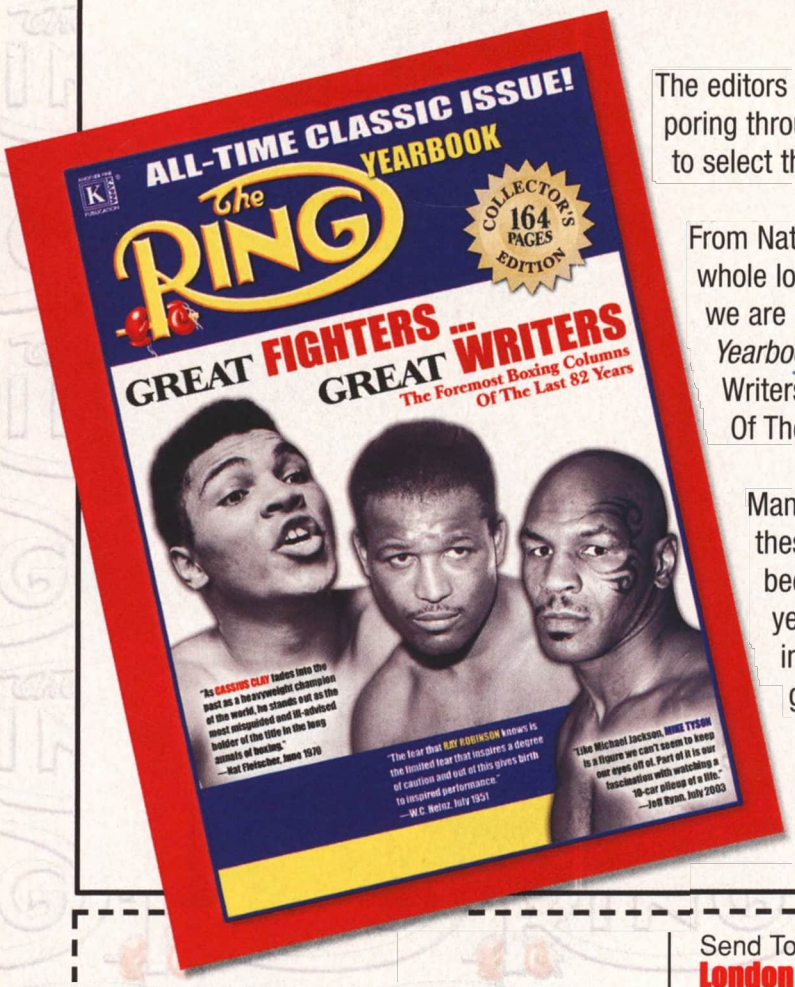

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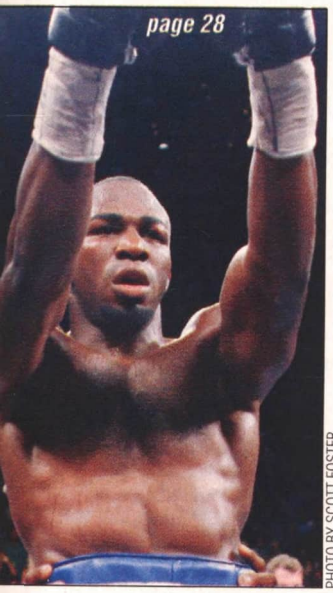
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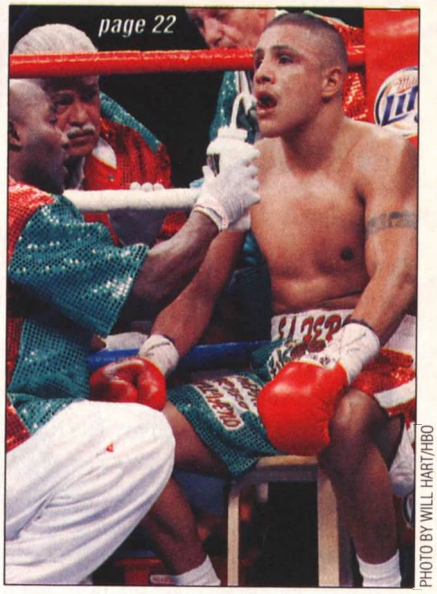
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PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Cover Photo: Jeff Lacy by G. Mitchell Davis

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RINGSIDE

Sometimes it's hard to know if people just don't get it or they simply don't want to. This is especially true when their own interests are at stake, and for boxers there are few things more important than being recognized as a true world champion.

The major motivation behind THE RING's championship policy has always been to inform the public as to who the real champions are, which isn't always apparent in these days of alphabet anarchy. THE RING doesn't make champions; the fighters themselves do that. We merely have a set of standards that separate the "world champions" from the "titleholders." And it's been gratifying that more and more people are turning to us to make that delineation.

But there are those who wanted THE RING to go beyond the bounds of responsible journalism by disregarding the facts and ignoring official decisions. The most recent example came in the wake of the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins middleweight championship fight, when a member of Hopkins' camp approached a member of THE RING staff and requested that we withhold recognition of Taylor due to the controversial nature of the decision. I understand that Hopkins was very unhappy when we refused.

This is not the first time this has happened. Back in June 2002, Marco Antonio Barrera was awarded THE RING featherweight championship belt following his 12-round decision of Erik Morales. Like the Taylor-Hopkins match, a lot of people disagreed with the decision, and few days after the fight, I got a fax from Morales asking THE RING not to recognized Barrera as champion. As in the Hopkins case, the request was denied. Judging from some of the statements Morales made in a recent interview to be published in the February 2006 issue of *KO* (on sale October 18, 2005), he still harbors bad feelings about it.

Ironically, I too disagreed with the official decisions in both the Barrera-Morales II and the Taylor-Hopkins fights, and if I had been the sole arbitrator, the results would have been reversed. But neither THE RING nor its representative render the official decision in fights; that's the job of the judges appointed by the boxing commission in the jurisdiction where the fight takes place. THE RING's task is to report, analyze, and, where appropriate, criticize.

If Hopkins and Morales could put aside their self-interests for a moment and think about the larger ramifications of their requests, they would realize how unbelievably confusing and counter-productive it would be for THE RING to ignore official results with which we disagree. Hardly a fight card goes by without at least one of the results being questioned, and if we start bending reality to placate Hopkins and Morales, pretty soon every fighter on the losing end of a close decision will want us to do the same for them.

Just like record keepers, commissions, and casino sports books, we have to recognize an official decision, regardless of whether or not we agree. Yes, I scored Taylor-Hopkins 116-114 in favor of Hopkins, but I've also ordered Taylor's RING belt, and it will be ready for him to wear into the ring when he faces Hopkins in the rematch. And it is in the ring, not on the pages of this magazine, where the winner will be determined.

***

Readers who have not visited our Web site are missing Senior Writer William Dettloff's new weekly column, exclusively on www.thering-online.com. As those familiar with Bill's work in THE RING and its sister publications already know, he's invariably insightful, fun-to-read, and on the cutting edge of boxing journalism.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 84, No. 12 **Fall 2005**

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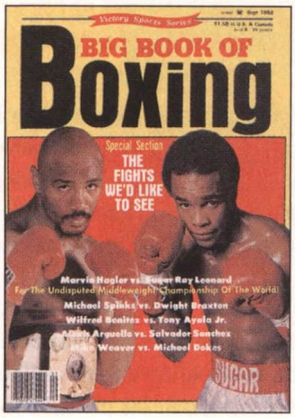

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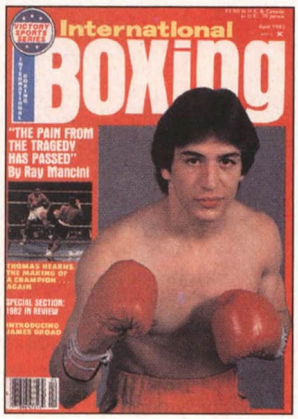

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ROUND ONE

THE DREAM BEFORE DISASTER

When two Philadelphia police officers knocked on the Blue Horizon's door early in the morning on August 9, Vernoca Michael's first hunch was that something must have happened in the neighborhood. But Michael, the owner of the legendary boxing venue, quickly noticed that the officers' demeanor didn't seem appropriate for reporting local teenage hijinks.

They stood there solemnly and proceeded to inform Michael that Gennaro Pellegrini Jr., a Philadelphia police officer whose dream of fighting professionally at the Blue she'd helped fulfill, had been killed in action while serving with his National Guard unit in Iraq.

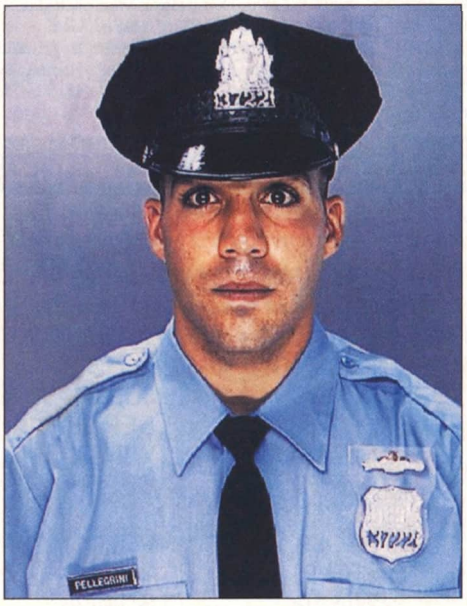
Pellegrini's death took Michael and everyone who had come in contact with the 31-year-old welterweight by surprise. Pellegrini's camouflaged trunks still hang in Michael's office. He wore them only once, on May 21, 2004, the night of his pro debut—when he came back to beat John Harris with a dramatic fourth-round kayo. Pellegrini gave the trunks to Michael with the hope that he would one day return and wear them again.

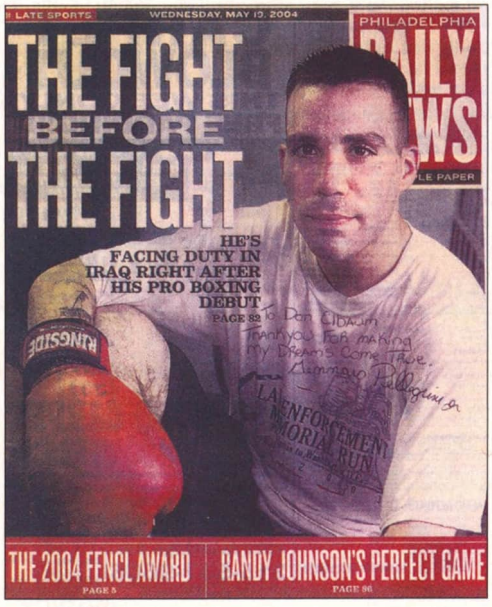
"I was totally shocked; I was almost in disbelief. It never crossed my mind that when I put his trunks in my office, that he would never be coming back to wear them," Michael said. "I'm not a very emotional person, but this kid tugged at my heart. Hearing about his death was too hard for me to take; it was hard for our whole Blue Horizon family to take. He was infectious with his spirit.

"Gerry was just so delighted to get the opportunity to fight. It seemed like such a natural thing to do. He kept thanking me, and telling me 'Thanks for making my dreams come true.' Gerry touched more than a few people."

Hardscrabble matchmaker Don Elbaum was clearly among them.

"I've been in this boxing game for a while, and I've never been through anything like this," Elbaum said. "His dream was to fight at the Blue Horizon. It was a deserving story, and when I met with the kid and I sat with him, he wasn't complaining about being sent to Iraq.





Pellegrini: Former police officer, boxer, and National Guard member

"He told me, 'If I don't come back, you made my dream come true.' That's haunted me ever since. I'm sick inside, because Gennaro was like family. I saved the letter from him saying he can't wait to come back and fight again."

Captain Lou Campione, from the 26th District, was Pellegrini's commanding officer for four years.

"It hit real hard," Campione said. "I informed everyone at roll call the morning we heard what occurred. You can't mask the emotion and hold it back. But Gerry got to fulfill his life's dream. The last thing he said to me was, 'See you in November.'"

—Joe Santoliquito

RHINO RAMPAGE

In mid-August, heavyweight Cliff Etienne, know as "The Black Rhino," was jailed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, charged with attempted first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder of a police officer, two counts of armed robbery, and second-degree kidnapping. The charges stemmed from an alleged robbery of a check-cashing business at gunpoint and its aftermath.

According to reports in *The Times-Picayune*, police said the 33-year-old Etienne stole $1,978 from a check-cashing business and fired a shot during the course of the robbery because the clerk failed to move fast enough. While fleeing the scene, Etienne encountered several police officers who gave chase. Etienne tried to steal a vehicle with two children inside, but was unable to get it started. As police closed in, Etienne tried to fire the gun at the officers, but the gun malfunctioned. He then carjacked another vehicle occupied by two children and their father, and when the father resisted, Etienne tried to shoot him. Fortunately, the gun misfired again. The fighter tried to drive away, but crashed the vehicle into a curb and the police took him into custody.

Etienne is no stranger to violent crime. In the 1980s, he was convicted of shooting a man in the arm during a robbery and sentenced to 40 years. While imprisoned, he took up boxing, and after serving 10 years was paroled in 1998. Even so, those who knew Etienne well were shocked at this latest development.

"Somebody needs to check him for drugs or something in his system or whatever," said Emily Etienne, the fighter's mother. "Because anybody who knows him knows this doesn't sound like him."

When he heard about Etienne's latest run-in with the law, Buddy McGirt, who trained Etienne for approximately 2½ years, said that he had detected problems months ago. McGirt told *The Times-Picayune* that he urged Etienne to see a neurologist after Etienne was stopped by Calvin Brock in January 2005.

"I talked to him afterward, and told him I thought there was something medically wrong, because whenever he got hit anywhere on the top of his head, he went down," said McGirt. "He called me up the next day, and I suggested he retire. And he didn't want to hear that."

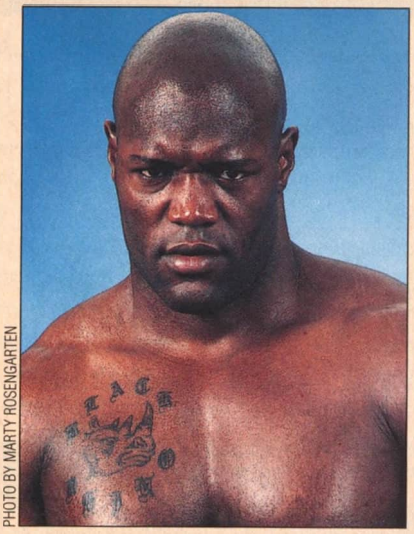


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Etienne: Back behind bars after crime spree

McGirt also theorized that Etienne might have pulled the robbery because he was having money problems.

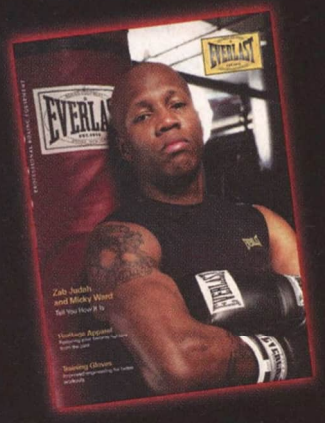
"It had to be financially driven," said McGirt. "That's the only thing I could come up with. I just couldn't picture him doing anything like that. When they told me about the carjacking, that really surprised me. I was like, 'What the hell was he thinking?' I just couldn't imagine him doing anything to harm kids, because he's great with kids."

Etienne's biggest payday had been a reported $900,000 for his kayo loss to Mike Tyson in 2001. Since then he'd gone 5-2-1 (3) to bring his overall record to 29-4-2 (20). In his final fight prior to being arrested, Etienne was stopped in three rounds by Nicolay Valuev on May 14 in Germany.

The most impressive outings of Etienne's career were his 10-round decision victories over Lamon Brewster and Lawrence Clay-Bey in 2002 and 2001, respectively, and a rousing 10-round draw with Frans Botha in '02.

No trial date has been set, but Etienne will remain in jail indefinitely because, according to a police spokesman, the arrest constituted a parole violation.

—Nigel Collins



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TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
8/4/05	Larry Mosley KO 4 Alexis Division	Telefutura	w	C-	B+	C+
Who knew Mosley still had this kind of fight in him? Not Division, we'll bet						
8/4/05	Demetrius Hopkins KO 8 Paul Delgado	Telefutura	w	C+	B	C+
Hopkins finally shows some firepower; good for him						
8/5/05	Lenord Pierre KO 6 Les Ralston	ESPN2	m	C-	B	C
If either of these guys threw a straight punch all night, we didn't see it						
8/5/05	Lawrence Clay-Bey D 10 Derrick Bryant	ESPN2	h	C-	B-	B-
A good heavyweight slugfest between two underachievers						
8/9/05	Julio Diaz KO 1 Russell Stoner Jones	ESPN2	jw	B-	D-	F
Gee, it's shocking when a guy who's 19-11 gets stopped in the first round by a top-10 guy, isn't it?						
8/12/05	Rogelio Castandea Tech W 6 Hernan Galaviz	ESPN2	w	C	D-	C
Who wants to bet that by the time you read this, Michael Moorer is back in comeback mode?						
8/12/05	Donald Camarena W 10 Jorge Padilla	ESPN2	jw	C-	C-	C
Camarena not bad, but can we see him matched a little tougher, please?						
8/12/05	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 1 Jonathan Nelson	Telefutura	jw	C+	C-	C-
We know he's fighting nobodies, but you still can tell; the kid can fight						
8/13/05	Luis Collazo KO 8 Miguel Angel Gonzalez	PPV	w	C+	D+	C
Think about it: is Gonzalez any less shot than Evander Holyfield is? And he keeps getting title fights!						
8/13/05	Oliver McCall KO 4 Przemyslaw Saleta	PPV	h	D	C+	C+
Saleta's a big hero in Poland; and you wonder why they've never been a world power						
8/13/05	Ricardo Mayorga W 12 Michelle Piccirillo	PPV	jm	B	B-	C+
Yes, Mayorga won, but did he land more than five or six good, solid punches all night?						
8/13/05	Hasim Rahman W 12 Monte Barrett	PPV	h	A-	B+	D+
By the third round we were wishing they'd go back to showing clips of Foreman knocking out Scott LeDoux						
8/18/05	Andre Ward KO 3 Christopher Holt	FOX SN	m	B-	C+	C
Raise your hand if Ward reminds you of David Reid sans the droopy eye						
8/18/05	Audley Harrison KO 4 Robert Wiggins	FOX SN	h	C-	C+	C+
Hey Audley: tick, tick, tick						
8/19/05	Juan Lazcano KO 1 Marco Angel Perez	Telefutura	jw	C+	C-	B-
The uppercut's a beautiful and terrible thing when it lands right						
8/19/05	Vinny Maddalone KO 5 Shannon Miller	ESPN2	h	C-	B+	A
Weeee! Proof that average fighters can make great fights; this was a beauty						
8/20/05	Humberto Soto W 12 Rocky Juarez	HBO	f	B+	B	B+
Soto gave a pretty fair impression of Antonio Margarito in there, didn't he?						
8/20/05	Fernando Vargas W 10 Javier Castillejo	HBO	jm	A-	B-	C+
Note to Castillejo: when you're fighting on TV, don't kiss women on the way to the ring who are not named Mrs. Castillejo						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

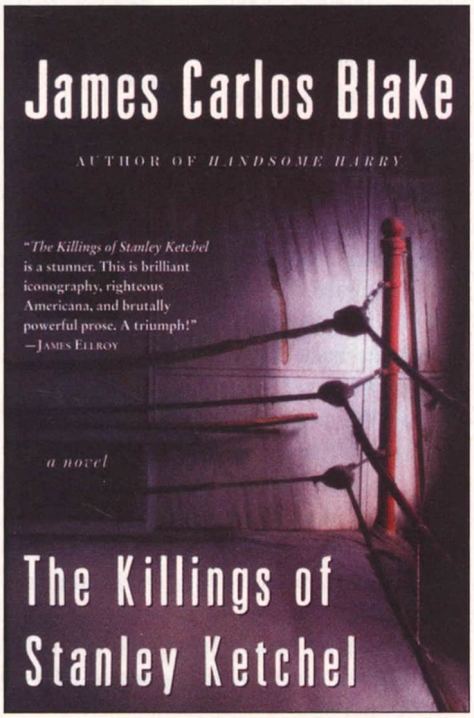
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

Early-20th century middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel was clearly one of the fiercest, most fearless, and fascinating characters in ring history, but even the staunchest idolaters of "The Michigan Assassin" might find themselves cringing and snickering at some of the excesses in *The Killings of Stanley Ketchel* (William Morrow, $25.95, 311 pages, hardcover), the muscular, testosterone-drenched fictional biography by award-winning novelist James Carlos Blake.

What Ned Buntline and his dime novels did for Buffalo Bill Cody, Blake does for (or to) Ketchel in this wooly account that puffs the middleweight champion up even more than Ketchel appeared in his oversized cowboy boots and buttoned-up overcoat standing next to heavyweight champion Jack Johnson before their famous and controversial fight in 1909. Blake's Ketchel is murderous in the ring and especially out of it, randier (and more voracious in the sack) than some former U.S. Presidents, a gifted crooner and dancer; and, perhaps most stunning of all, a member of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.



Accounts of Ketchel's fights are graphic, violent, and not strictly accurate, and take a back seat anyway to the much more entertaining vignettes involving Ketchel and Johnson before their fight and especially at the cathouse to which they and novelist Jack ("Mr. Scribbles") London repair following Johnson's 1910 defeat of Jim Jeffries in Reno.

While the writing is skillful and the action is fast-paced, Blake occasionally strains to the point being corny to make Ketchel larger-than-life, as when he has the dauntless champion manage to get to his feet after the rifle blast from which he would soon die by counting aloud over himself like a boxing referee.

The biggest plot twist concerns Col. Rollin P. Dickerson, at whose Springfield, Missouri, ranch Walter Dipley did the dirty deed. I won't spoil it, but it's another pretty big stretch.

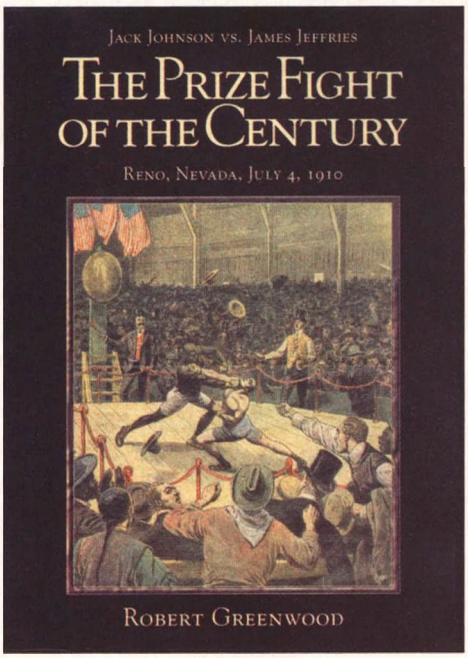
It's a fun read, but falls short of the bar that Blake set so high for himself with his previous novel, *Handsome Harry* (about a Dillinger-type gangster, not Greb).

—Pete Ehrmann

For some time now, just about very major fight has been marketed under some apocalyptic slogan or dramatic catchphrase designed to inspire fans to reach for the number of their PPV provider. But the genius who first billed the Jack Johnson-James J. Jeffries heavyweight title match as the "Fight Of The Century" not only possessed mind-blowing chutzpah—the 20th Century, after all, was only a decade old when the fight happened on July 4, 1910—but probably deserves an award for his startling prescience.

For while other 1900s fights—Dempsey-Tunney, Louis-Schmeling II, Ali-Frazier III—put boxing on the front pages, the societal and cultural impact of the one in which Jeffries answered the public cry to take back the greatest title in sports for the honor of the white race, and went down in flames trying, trumps all the rest.

It's a familiar story to most fight fans and anyone who saw Ken Burns' PBS documentary *Unforgivable Blackness* last winter. In *The Prize Fight of the Century*, (Jack Bacon & Co., $27.95, 172 pages, hardcover), Robert Greenwood doesn't break much new round, but his straightforward rehearsal of the facts and round-by-round dissection of the fight itself make for compelling reading, nonetheless.

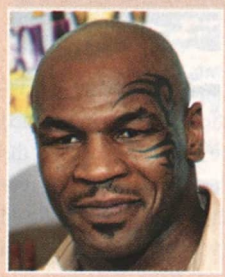


Greenwood is no ring historian—he calls the 1903 Joe Gans-Battling Nelson lightweight fight in Goldfield, Nevada, a light heavyweight championship go, and white hope Luther McCarty is Luther "McCarthy." But he deftly conveys a sense of what it was like to be in Reno ("the town that wore a cowboy hat, red suspenders, and a flashy kerchief") for the big fight. He also debunks a few still-popular myths (including that the Reno Military Band played "All Coons Look Alike To Me" in the arena before the fighters got down to business), relates an anecdote or two about the wife of the challenger from which it is apparent that in the marital ring she was Jack Johnson to Jim's Jeffries; and renders accurate portraits of the fighters whose personalities as well as their pigmentation were night-and-day.

A selection of wonderful on-site photos by Percy Dana enhances the volume's worthiness.

—Pete Ehrmann

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

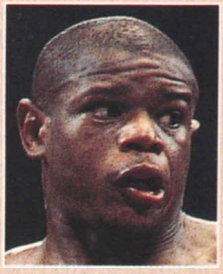


Tyson: Wild Mediterranean vacation

Italian police have cleared former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson** of rape and kidnap charges. Moreover, Florence Botoli, the woman who made the allegations, has been charged with slander by deputy prosecutor Paola Ferrari. Botoli, 33, had claimed that Tyson beat her and forced her to have sex aboard a chartered yacht that was anchored just off the coast of Sicily. During the same Mediterranean vacation, Tyson was fined $373.71 for riding a jet ski too close to the shore and riding without an helmet. In a separate incident, a boat ferrying guest to Tyson's yacht almost sank because there were too many people on board ... ESPN Inc., Mark Burnett Productions, and DreamWorks Television has announced that the second season of *The Contender* is set to begin airing on ESPN in April 2006. "Our vision from the onset was to improve the entertainment experience of televised boxing for the fans," said Burnett. "What better platform to achieve that vision than on the network that pioneered sports television programming." ESPN has options to renew the series for two subsequent seasons ... Super salesman **George Foreman** is now co-chairman of George Foreman Enterprises, Inc., which will produce a line of health and fitness equipment ... **Laila Ali** has hired Harlan J. Werner and Damon Bingham of the sports marketing and entertainment company, Sports Placement Services, Inc. Bingham will act as Ali's advisor for all day-to-day activities of her boxing career and Werner will handle her marketing opportunities. SPS, Inc.'s roster of clients include Laila's father, **Muhammad Ali** ... According to a report by Don Stewart in the *Reading* (Pennsylvania) *Eagle*, local welterweight **Kermit Cintron** has been dropped by Main Events and signed to a new contract by Florida-based promoter **Bobby Bostic**, who also recently signed former welterweight champion **Cory Spinks** ... In another major signing, former featherweight champion **Manny Pacquiao** reached an agreement with **Gary Shaw Productions**. "As a promoter, you always hope to sign a 'blue chip' athlete who will win a world title. Today, I have signed a 'platinum chip' world-class champion whose persona transcends sports and approaches folklore in the Philippines. I feel privileged that Manny has chosen me as his promoter," said Shaw ... As it turns out, former welterweight champion **Ricardo Mayorga** will not have to be retried on rape charges in Nicaragua after all. The country's Appeals Court had ordered a retrial, but five of Nicaragua's six Supreme Court justices voted to block the retrial in a decision that was handed down three days after Mayorga won the WBC super welterweight title ... As reported in the "Outside The Ropes" section of THE RING DOUBLE, Volume 5, 2005, junior lightweight **Martin Sanchez Jr.** died as the result of head injuries incurred in his July 1 bout against **Rustam Nugaev** in Las Vegas. Lingering questions about the tragedy have prompted the WBC to launch an investigation. "That life could have been saved," said WBC President **Jose Sulaiman**. "It would be dishonest of me if I remained silent." Sulaiman claimed that a WBC representative sent to monitor another fight that night "was witness to several internal events, above all in the dressing room, where there were problems that were not rapidly resolved." ... Junior flyweight **Ruben Contreras** returned home to Mexico City 10 weeks after suffering a brain injury in a bout with **Brian Viloria** in Los Angeles. Although physicians said that although Contreras will never be 100 percent, he is now able to take care of himself and communicate normally ... Meanwhile, Chicago heavyweight **Giuseppe "Drew" Kidd** is fighting for his life at Mount Sinai Medical Center, where he was taken after collapsing during a sparring session with **Carl Davis** at the Garfield Park Fieldhouse on August 18 ... Undefeated junior welterweight **Nick Casal**, who was profiled in the November 2005 issue of THE RING EXTRA, saw his record slip from 12-0 (11) to 11-0 (10) with 1 no-contest after he tested positive for cocaine following his June 16 kayo of **Martinus Clay** in Glen Burnie, Maryland. The 19-year-old Casal, who lives in Niagara Falls, New York, has been placed on six-months suspension ... Former WBO junior middleweight and middleweight titleholder **Harry Simon**, 33, has been sentenced to two years in prison after being found guilty of culpable homicide in his native Namibia. The court ruled that Simon's reckless driving caused the death of three Belgian tourists in a November 2002 automobile accident. Simon, 23-0 (17), last fought in April '02, when he won a unanimous 12-round decision over **Armand Krajnc** in Copenhagen, Denmark ... **Graham van der Walt**, who won South African titles at flyweight, bantamweight, and featherweight, died in August at the age of 72. Van der Walt, who fought sporadically from 1955 to 1962, tallied an overall pro record of 16-12-3 (12).

Mayorga: No new rape trial

Laila: Hires new reps



Simon: Gets two years in jail

THE PUNCHLINES

"He signed with Don King. That's all you have to do. That's what this business is about. It's not about the fighter's merit"

—ESPN2's Teddy Atlas explaining why Ricardo Mayorga, who had lost two of his last three fights, was fighting for the vacant WBC super welterweight title.

"Hopefully, on October 1 he gets his little rear end through the ropes in Tampa."

—Ross Greenburg, president of HBO Sports, angry with Roy Jones for failing to attend a New York City press conference to his rubber match with Antonio Tarver.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

For weekly updated RING ratings, go to www.thering-online.com

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   Junior Middleweight
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **ERIK MORALES**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Featherweight
7. **RICKY HATTON**
   Junior Welterweight
8. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Lightweight
9. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Middleweight
10. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
    Middleweight

(For period ended August 24, 2005)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Monte Barrett slips from number five to six, based on his lackluster 12-round decision loss to third-rated Hasim Rahman. Barrett's demotion moves up Lamont Brewster from six to five.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Jeff Lacy climbs from fourth to third, based on his seventh-round stoppage of Robin Reid, previously rated seventh. The reshuffling enables Lacy, as the number-three contender, to fight for the vacant super middleweight world championship against number-one rated Joe Calzaghe, possibly in November. Lacy's advancement also forced down Markus Beyer from three to four. Due to Reid's demotion from seven to nine, Manny Siaca and Otis Grant each climb one rung each, to seventh and eighth, respectively.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Oscar De La Hoya, rated sixth last issue, exits due to inactivity. "The Golden Boy" last fought on September 18, 2004, and has announced he will not fight at all in 2005. Fernando Vargas also exits as he is now campaigning at junior middleweight. The departure of De La Hoya and Vargas makes room for Sebastian Sylvester at number-nine and Scott Dann at 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Fernando Vargas enters at number four, based on his 10-round decision over Javier Castillejo (seventh last issue). Vargas' inclusion drops down everyone fourth or below one slot each. Kofi Jantuah (ninth last issue) exits due to inactivity. Travis Simms (currently seventh) is nearing expulsion, as he has not fought since October 2, 2004.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Humberto Soto enters at number three, thanks to his upset of Rocky Juarez, previously rated third. Juarez slips to four and everyone below four drops one place each and Hiroyuki Enoki, previously rated 10, is forced out.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No Changes

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: There was some movement in the straws, as Eagle Kyowa vaulted from sixth to fourth by regaining the WBA title with a decision victory over Katsunari Takayama. The reshuffling drops Takayama from third to fourth and everyone below fourth slips one place each.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended August 24, 2005

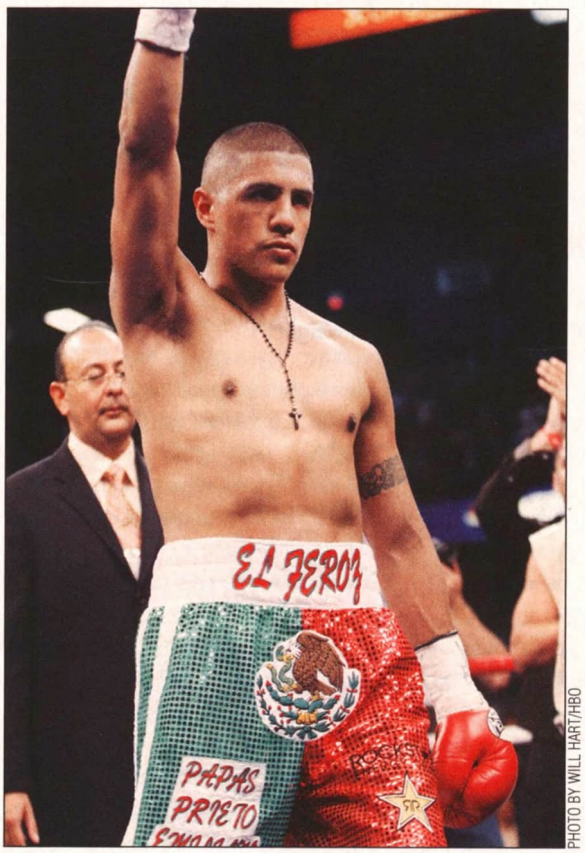


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Fernando Vargas moved to junior middleweight by beating Castillejo

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 35-2 (34)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 38-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ**
Methuen, MA 41-5-1 (28)
3. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 41-5-1 (33)
4. **JAMES TONEY**
Ann Arbor, MI 68-4-2 (43)
5. **LAMON BREWSTER**
Los Angeles, CA 32-2 (28)
6. **MONTE BARRETT**
Queens, NY 31-4 (17)
7. **CALVIN BROCK**
Charlotte, NC 26-0 (21)
8. **SAMUEL PETER**
Las Vegas, NV 24-0 (21)
9. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 44-3 (40)
10. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Clifton, NJ 31-5-3 (19)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT
St. Petersburg, FL 49-3 (25)

1. **ROMAN KARMAZIN**
Russia 34-1-1 (21)
2. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 21-2-1 (13)
3. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
4. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 26-2 (22)
5. **IKE QUARTEY**
Ghana 36-2-1 (30)
6. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 38-10-1 (20)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS**
Norwalk, CT 24-0 (18)
8. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 58-6 (39)
9. **RODNEY JONES**
Lafayette, LA 36-3 (22)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA**
Mexico 25-1 (24)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 44-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI**
South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 37-5-2 (21)
4. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 23-1 (16)
5. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 24-2-2 (14)
6. **VICTOR POLO**
Colombia 34-5-3 (24)
7. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 64-14 (29)
8. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 36-0-1 (20)
9. **SPEND ABAZI**
Denmark 32-1 (10)
10. **NICKY COOK**
England 25-0 (15)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 56-3-1 (36)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR**
France 28-2-2 (19)
3. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 38-3 (28)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 23-0 (17)
5. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 25-0 (17)
6. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 22-2 (16)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 42-2-1 (18)
8. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA**
Argentina 22-0 (13)
9. **GABULA VABAZA**
South Africa 21-0-1 (5)
10. **SHOJI KIMURA**
Japan 18-0-1 (7)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 34-3 (30)
2. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 18-2 (5)
3. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 48-2-2 (34)
4. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
Thailand 63-8 (42)
5. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 18-0 (15)
6. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 34-4 (20)
7. **CRUZ CARVAJAL**
Mexico 25-13-1 (21)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS**
Mexico 38-11-3 (12)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 29-4 (25)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 17-0 (6)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 31-2 (21)

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
Guyana 21-1 (17)
2. **JOHNNY NELSON**
England 44-12-2 (29)
3. **CARL THOMPSON**
England 33-6 (25)
4. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 17-0 (9)
5. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 32-3-2 (25)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 24-1-1 (22)
7. **DALE BROWN**
Canada 33-4-1 (21)
8. **PIETRO AURINO**
Italy 34-2 (16)
9. **ALEXANDER GUROV**
Ukrain 38-4-1 (33)
10. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 32-1 (25)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 23-3 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 42-10-2 (28)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 22-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 49-3 (38)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 38-2 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
France 47-2 (31)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 37-3-1 (23)
7. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 29-0 (20)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 23-2 (17)
9. **THOMAS ULRICH**
Germany 28-1 (19)
10. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
Chicago, IL 47-6 (30)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
Wales 39-0 (31)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 20-0 (16)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 32-2 (12)
5. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 23-3 (18)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 20-2 (19)
7. **MANNY SIACA**
Puerto Rico 18-5 (16)
8. **OTIS GRANT**
Canada 37-2-1 (17)
9. **ROBIN REID**
England 38-5-1 (27)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 22-0 (16)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 24-0 (17)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 46-3-1 (32)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 49-3 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 24-1 (11)
4. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 16-0 (14)
5. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
England 40-3 (35)
6. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
Canada 23-1 (13)
7. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 31-7 (12)
8. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 19-0 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 19-1 (8)
10. **SCOTT DANN**
England 22-2 (16)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 34-2 (25)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 32-4 (23)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 40-4 (35)
4. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 26-1 (12)
5. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
Denmark 36-0 (27)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 24-1 (22)
7. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
Worcester, MA 37-4-1(24)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 35-3 (11)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
Chicago, IL 18-2 (9)
10. **SEBASTIAN LUJAN**
Argentina 23-2-1 (15)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 39-0 (29)

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 34-0 (23)
2. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 24-0 (20)
3. **CARLOS MAUSSA**
Colombia 19-2 (16)
4. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
Australia 31-2 (25)
5. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 32-1-2 (19)
6. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 39-7 (30)
7. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 25-2-1 (17)
8. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
Washington, D.C. 30-4-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 40-8-1 (26)
10. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 32-1 (17)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: DIEGO CORRALES
Las Vegas, NV 40-2 (33)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 52-7-1 (46)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
Miami, FL 31-3-1 (19)
3. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 34-3-1 (26)
4. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 28-0 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 32-3 (24)
6. **ACELINO FREITAS**
Brazil 37-1 (32)
7. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Kyrgyzstan 20-0-1 (12)
8. **RICKY QUILES**
Puerto Rico 38-6-3 (8)
9. **JULIEN LORCY**
France 56-4-2 (41)
10. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 20-0 (11)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 60-4 (42)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-2 (34)
3. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 39-3-2 (30)
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 41-3 (28)
5. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 21-1-1 (10)
6. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 43-3-1 (25)
7. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 44-2-1 (32)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
Bellflower, CA 41-5-1 (24)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 31-1 (16)
10. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
Australia 25-2 (14)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 29-1 (16)
2. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
North Korea 31-3-1 (8)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 23-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 31-1-1 (24)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-1 (26)
6. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 28-4 (18)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 22-1 (9)
8. **HAWK MAKEPULA**
South Africa 26-3 (17)
9. **GERRY PENALOSA**
JPhilippines 48-5-2 (33)
10. **MARK JOHNSON**
Washington, D.C. 44-4 (28)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 56-2 (31)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
Venezuela 25-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 24-0 (19)
4. **IRENE PACHECO**
Colombia 29-1 (22)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 40-3-1 (30)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 19-0-2 (13)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
Nicaragua 34-2-2 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 19-0 (7)
9. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 23-2-1 (10)
10. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
Australia 28-2 (21)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 20-1 (17)
2. **WILL GRIGSBY**
St. Paul, MN 18-2-1 (11)
3. **VICTOR BURGOS**
Mexico 37-14-3 (22)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 21-3-1 (15)
5. **PICHITNOI SIRIWAT**
Thailand 34-2 (15)
6. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 22-2-2 (13)
7. **ERIC ORTIZ**
Mexico 24-4-1 (16)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 17-1 (13)
9. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 33-4-1 (20)
10. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
Colombia 35-4 (21)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 18-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 50-7-4 (22)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 23-0 (5)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 14-1 (5)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 15-2 (7)
6. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-7-3 (13)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 18-3-1 (15)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
9. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 34-3-1 (29)
10. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 21-0 (16)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

THE ANSWERS, MY FRIENDS, ARE BLOWING IN THE WIND

Too much sun beating down on the cranium and too many rum-and-cokes during the summer apparently caused my brain to atrophy. Don't worry, though, it'll be back at full strength by the middle of autumn (though you may not be able to tell). Until then, don't look to me for all of the answers. Instead, I'm the guy with all of the questions. Such as …

•Aren't you at least a little surprised that some kind of Mike Tyson reality show isn't on the fall television schedule?

•Has there been a dumber question posed by a sports "journalist" in recent memory than ESPNews' Cindy Brunson asking reporter Shelley Smith if Jermain Taylor's win over Bernard Hopkins—a guy with 20 successful title defenses, the pound-for-pound crown, and a 12-year winning streak—was the biggest win of Taylor's career?

•The next time the HBO broadcast team attends a Taylor fight, will the boys in the blazers be issued press credentials or a bunch of cornerman's passes? Isn't it fair to say that they couldn't root any harder for Taylor unless they were holding his spit bucket and wiping his face with a sponge?

•When the cameras are off and Taylor is alone with his thoughts, does he realize he received an early Christmas present from the judges?

•Wouldn't it have been fitting if all of the commercials aired during the SportsCentury profile of George Foreman on ESPN Classic had featured Big George pitching everything from grills to mufflers to Doritos? Then again, if even half of Foreman's ads were shown, wouldn't there have been more commercial time than actual show?

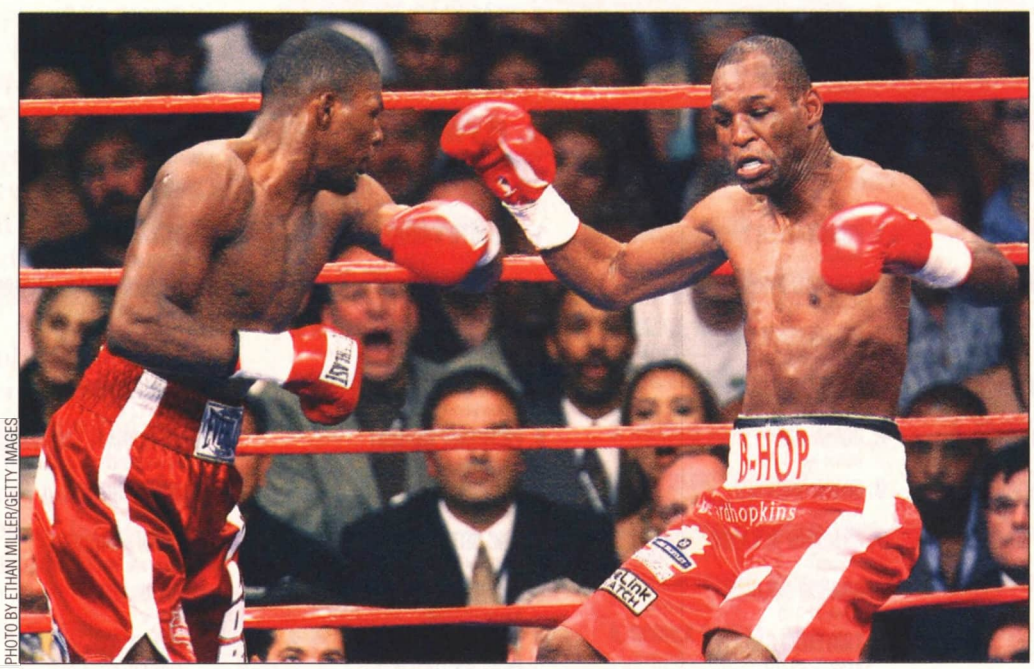


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Yes, Cindy. It was big.

•Assuming Hopkins has only two good fights left in him, shouldn't they be a Taylor rematch and a showdown with Winky Wright?

Wait a second, should I be issued a straitjacket because I'd rather see Hopkins-Wright than Hopkins-Antonio Tarver?

•Why does ESPN Classic air the replays of Muhammad Ali-Jurgen Blin and Ali-Wepner as often as it replays the "Thrilla In Manila" and "The Rumble In The Jungle"?

•How is it that Ali's right hand could crack the iron jaws of Foreman and Ron Lyle, but have no effect on the shaky chins of Alfredo Evangelista and Leon Spinks?

•There hasn't exactly been a stampede of hungry studs looking to fill the void left by Lennox Lewis retirement, has there?

•If the International Boxing Hall of Fame keeps insisting that four candidates from the "Modern" category be inducted each year, will we be listening to speeches from the likes of Ray Mancini and Vinny Paz in Canastota one day?

•Think back to the primes of Tyson, Kostya Tszyu, and Arturo Gatti. Could you have ever envisioned all three of them quitting on their stools within the space of three weeks?

•If Evander Holyfield's legs have been shot for about five years now, what made him think he had any chance in that silly televised dance contest?

•If Samuel Peter and Paul Spadafora signed long-term contracts with Don King, would the promoter rob Peter to pay Paul?

•Micky Ward trilogy or not, didn't Gatti severely harm his Hall of Fame chances by appearing so outclassed against Floyd Mayweather? Or will, Gatti, too, benefit from the IBHOF's wide open-door policy?

•Why do they call it Ultimate Fighting if no pure boxers compete in it? Oh, please, are you going to tell me again how these superhuman martial artists can use their legs, incapacitate a grizzly bear in three seconds, bring an army battalion to its knees, etc? Well, is it just me, or have you also noticed that these "ultimate" warriors usually hit the floor the very first time they get caught with a solid punch? Would they be able to get to their feet, execute their chokeholds, or do anything else if it was Vitali Klitschko who landed such a punch?

•Is Oscar De La Hoya's new motto, "If you can't beat 'em, sign 'em"?

•How much zest can the businessman from East L.A. still have for those nasty wars of attrition he has a habit of getting into? True, De La Hoya has always been a different kind of soldier, but in most cases, when a fighter with numerous outside interests is beaten as conclusively as "The Golden Boy" was by Hopkins, he's usually loses much of his desire. Will De La Hoya ever again resemble the truly elite competitor he has been?

•How would you like to be Johnny Tapia's wife, Teresa? Isn't hers a case of hoping her aging husband *doesn't* retire, for fear that life away from the ring is more dangerous to him than the battles inside of it?

•If we can get Mayweather and Zab Judah to fight each other, do we really care if it might damage their friendship?

•Wouldn't you trade bombs with *your* buddy for a couple of mil?

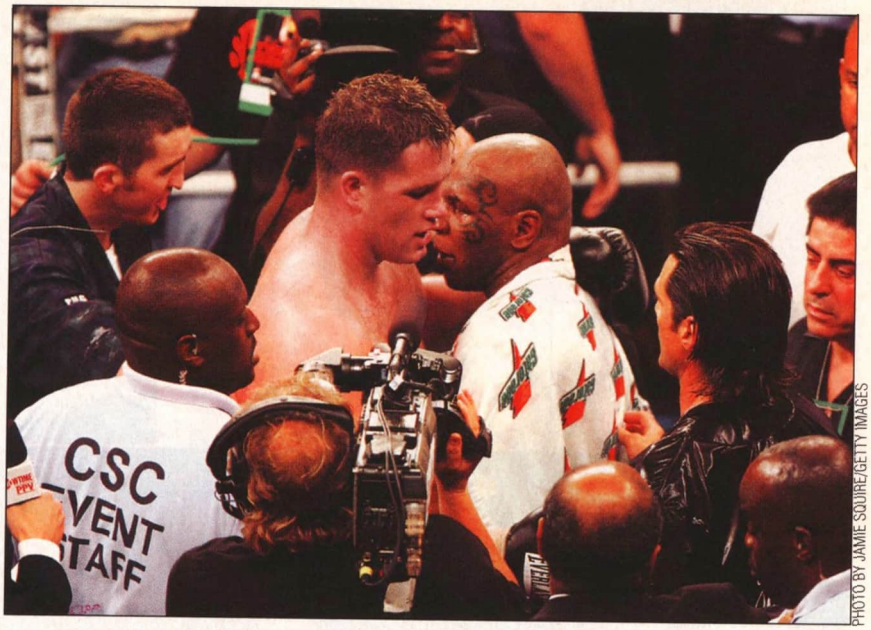


PHOTO BY JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

What happened to Tyson between Lewis and McBride?

You're thinking, *I'd do it for even a couple of thou*, aren't you?

•Now that a company called Newport Marketing Inc. is selling replicas of THE RING championship belts awarded to Sugar Ray Robinson, Jake LaMotta, Archie Moore, Rocky Marciano, Carlos Ortiz, and others, do you think I'll finally be able to get my hands on a copy of Johnny Bumphus' WBA junior welterweight title strap, circa 1984?

•How many more fighters have to slip before someone comes up with a better idea than painting sponsors' logos on the ring canvas? Has anyone thought of simply superimposing the logos on the screen, the way sponsors of some tennis tournaments do?

•If Hopkins gave up wearing his trademark hood because it might be perceived as insensitive to the victims of terror and beheadings, then why is he still delivering a slit-your-throat gesture upon entering the ring?

•How can Tyson stand up to all of that punishment from Lewis before falling, and then trash his reputation by surrendering meekly to Kevin McBride?

•Will the Kassim Ouma hysteria die down a little now?

•Do you think Rafael Palmeiro lists James Toney and Fernando Vargas as his favorite fighters?

•*The Contender* was great publicity for the fight game, but are Judah and your columnist the only two people who were troubled by the fact that glorified clubfighters were competing for the chance to win *a million dollars*? How many fighters who are so much better than Sergio Mora or Peter Manfredo will never get within light years of that kind of opportunity?

•Is Roberto Duran serious when he tells *Sports Illustrated* that he quit in the rematch with Sugar Ray Leonard because he wasn't in great shape and figured he'd do better in the rubber match? Excuse me, but didn't he realize he was part of a multimillion-dollar superfight and not a cheap wrestling angle?

•And is *Sports Illustrated* serious when it lists among the most coveted pieces of lost sports memorabilia the piece of Holyfield's ear that was bitten off by Tyson? Is it really worth $5,000? Wait. Am I really wasting ink wondering about this? ■

CAMERA CLICKS

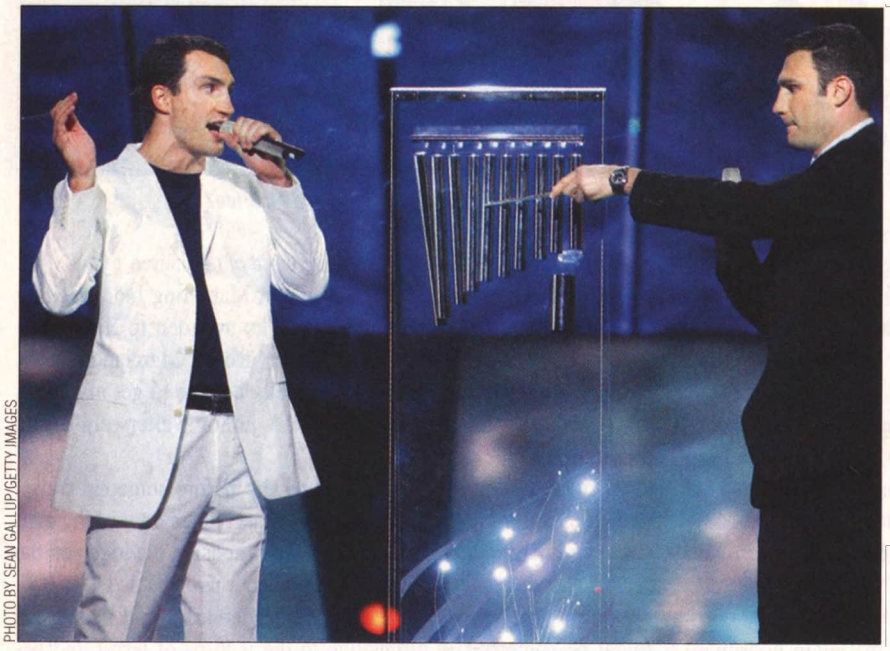


PHOTO BY SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

Welcome to the Klitschko brothers' wildly popular nightclub act, where Vitali provides instrumental accompaniment as Wladimir performs such smash hits as "Bad, Bad Lamon Brewster," "Hit Me Baby One Less Time," and his trademark number, "Wlad To The Bone." And best of all, he does his whole act while dressed just like Sonny Crockett.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Say hello to the ultimate consolation prize. Przemyslaw Saleta might have gotten blown out in four rounds by 40-year-old Oliver McCall in August, but he was feeling no pain afterward, thanks to the fact that his girlfriend is Playboy Playmate Kasia Kraszewska. As dangerous as McCall is, we'd all be willing to take a few right hands from "The Atomic Bull" if this was waiting for us in the dressing room afterward.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Yes, Jermain Taylor is dressed as one might be for a job interview, but don't worry—he's not applying to be Bill Clinton's intern. The ex-President met with the man who put the "Ex" in "Executioner" to congratulate him on his middleweight title win over Bernard Hopkins, and to thank him for doing their shared home state of Arkansas proud. Despite his nickname of "Slick Willy," Clinton didn't have any defensive tips for Taylor heading into the Hopkins rematch.

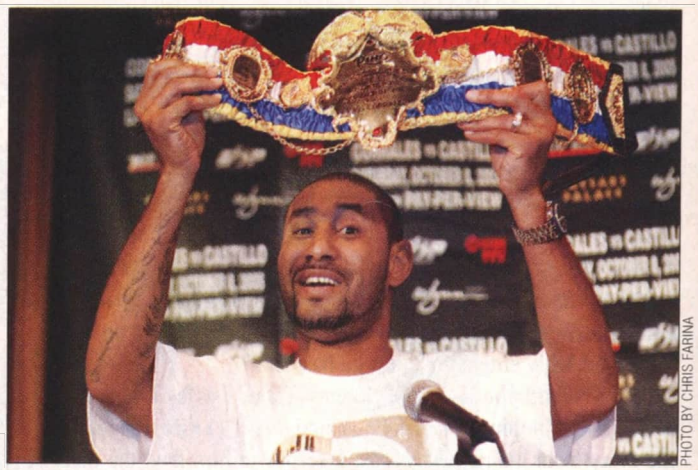


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

This, right here, is what makes those 10 rounds of brutality and those two violent knockdowns against Jose Luis Castillo worthwhile. Nobody's RING-belt was ever quite as hard-earned as Diego Corrales', and "Chico" had every right to be proud as he displayed the hardware at the press conference announcing the rematch with Castillo. And this is the only belt that you know for a fact Corrales won't be stripped of between now and the opening bell.

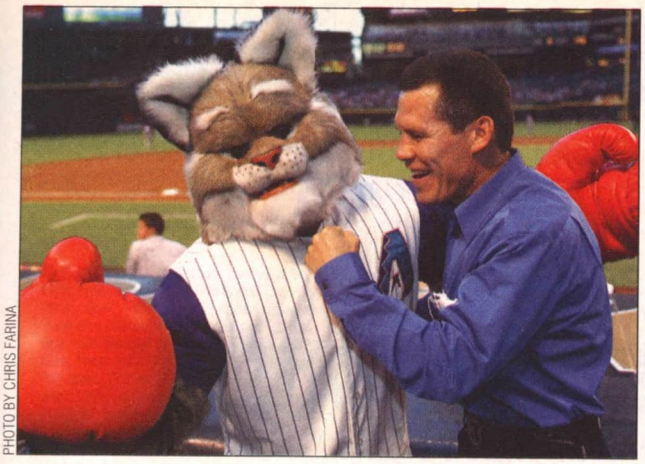


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

"The Cat Of Arizona" is no match for "The Lion Of Culiacan." Your guess is as good as ours why a team called the Diamondbacks has a feline as a mascot, but it still makes a heckuva lot more sense than the fact that Julio Cesar Chavez has had three "retirement" fights and is still fighting. At least he appears to be choosing opponents with fairly large, heavily padded gloves.

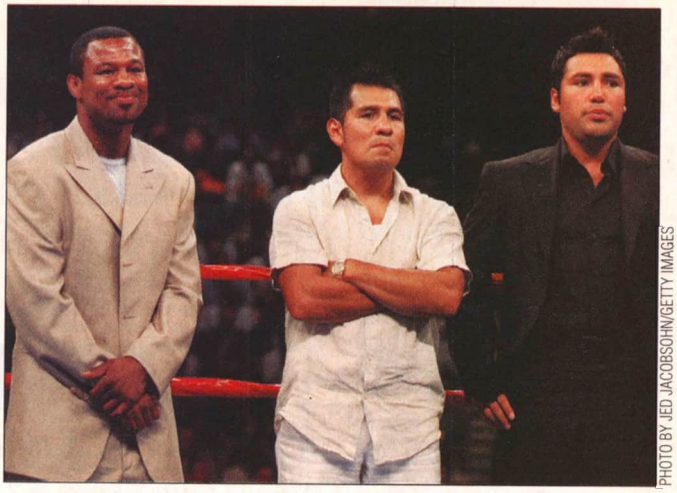


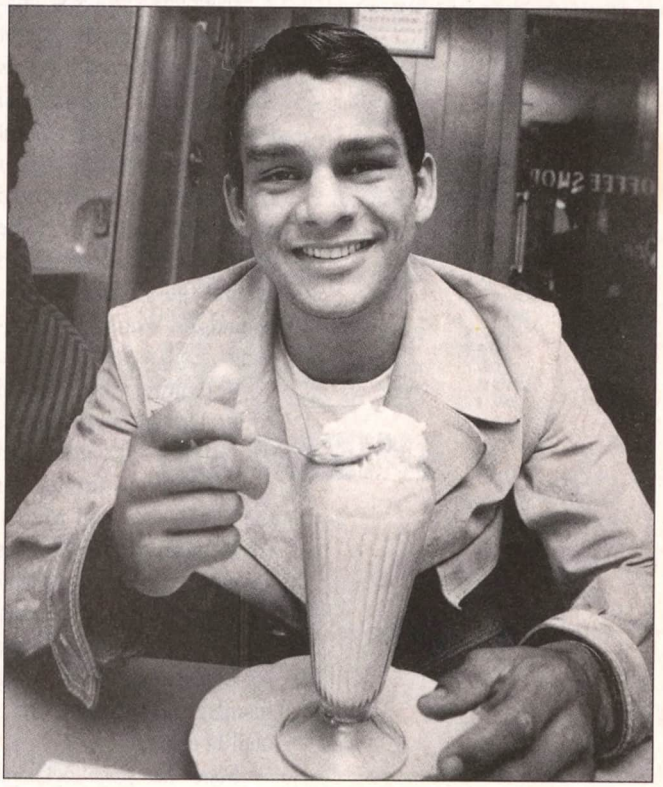
PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

No, we didn't hop into Doc Brown's time machine and return from the year 2012 with a photo from the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies. But this is quite the star-studded crew that Oscar De La Hoya has put together, huh? Marco Antonio Barrera has been with Golden Boy Promotions for more than a year now, but Sugar Shane Mosley was just recently added, bringing the number of fighters De La Hoya promotes who have defeated him in the ring up to two. Can signing Felix Trinidad be far behind?

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Ain't nuthin' like good sax. Ballroom Boxing promoter Scott Wagner hired himself to perform the National Anthem at a recent show, and he actually played quite well. Can Don King busting out his bassoon be far off? Or perhaps Cedric Kushner banging out the Star-Spangled Banner on the bongos?

NOSTALGIA CORNER



The food of champions? Is this where it all started, the ballooning up between fights and the steady, seemingly inevitable progression from lean lightweight to sloppy super middle? It all seemed so innocent at the time; the fresh-faced Duran had just beat Ken Buchanan to win the lightweight title and celebrated with a giant vanilla sundae. Had we only known.

NEW FACES

ABNER MARES

Super Bantamweight

By Joe Santoliquito

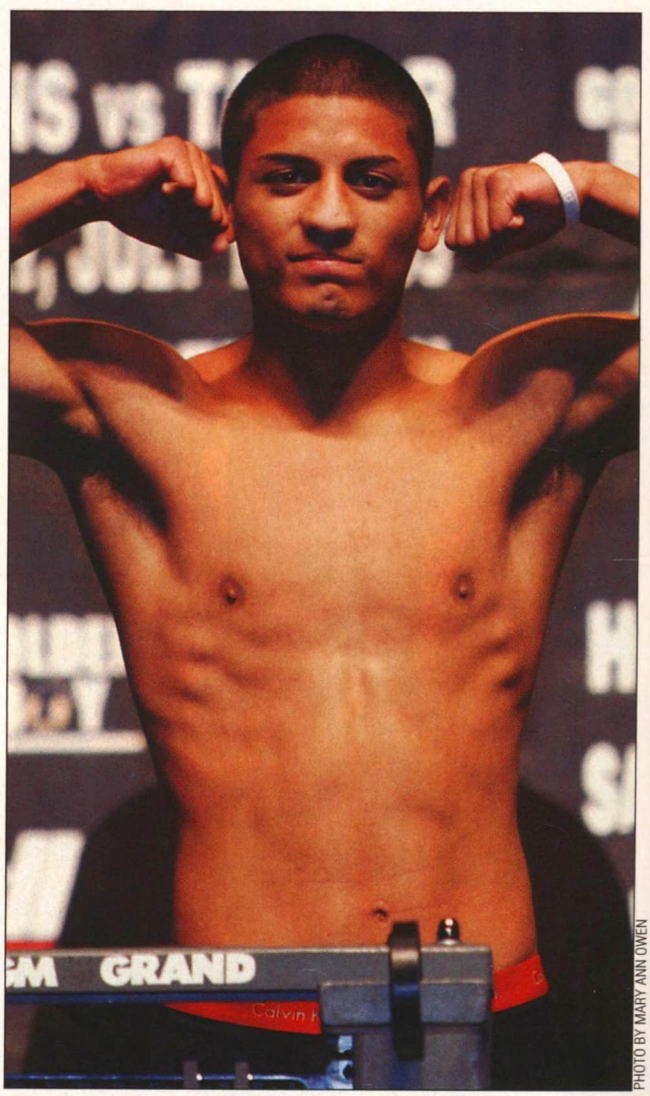


PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN

PRO RECORD

2005

Jan. 6	Luis Malave, Tuscon, AZ	KO 2
Feb. 19	Francisco Soto, Los Angeles, CA	KO 5
April 29	David Vasquez, Laredo, TX	W 6
June 16	Baladan Trevizo, Fort Worth, TX	KO 5
July 16	Elvis Martinez, Las Vegas, NV	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
5	5	0	0	4

The smell wasn't so bad, because much of Abner Mares' senses were dulled by stomach cramps. He'd pick, scratch, and claw his way through the plastic food wrapping and cardboard cartons, and the other assorted junk until he found his objective.

There it was. Joy was finding a gooey, discarded box of melting ice cream that Mares could scoop his hands into and feel soothed. He'd have to eat fast though, since he never knew when the police would arrive and send him and the others who had gathered around the huge trash bins behind the Wal-Mart scrambling.

Not eating for days and sifting through trash for outdated food—like discarded ice cream—was normal for the seven-year-old Mares. He slept on the floor of his apartment, one of eight jammed into a three-room unit, while his mother would leave for one job at seven in the morning and not arrive back from her other job until 11 at night.

Mares has since locked away the memories for safe keeping, recounting them every so often when he needs a reminder of how humble his beginnings were. Today, the 5'6" super bantamweight finds himself as one of the prized young jewels in Oscar De La Hoya's burgeoning Golden Boy Promotions stable.

Mares, who will turn 20 on November 28, is a former Mexican Olympian living in crime-ridden Hawaiian Gardens, California, or as Mares puts it, "The City of Hate." He's chalked up a nice 5-0 (4) start to his pro career and carries the looks and charisma to possibly one day

(Continued on page 55)

BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine*, the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Also: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO's* 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Also: Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Also: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

Nov. 1998 The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Tim Austin. Also: Cesar Bazan, Spencer Oliver, Bobby Czyz.

Dec. 1998: Winning Fights Is Easier Than Winning Fans: Why Can't We Appreciate Roy Jones? Color Pinup: Tim Austin. Interview: Michael Grant. Also: Christy Martin, Ali Reform Act, one-hit wonders.

Holiday 1998: Toe-To-Toe With The Top 10: Where Does Tyson Fit In? Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Inteview: Larry Hazzard. Also: Evander Holyfield, junior middleweights.

Jan. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Oscar Eliminates Chavez ... Now The Real Fights Begin! Color Pinup: Yory Boy Campas. Interview: William Joppy. Also: Mark Johnson, U.S.A. vs. the world.

Feb. 1999: Holyfield & Lewis: Did They Hurt Themselves Before They Could Hurt Each Other? Color Pinup: Andrew Golota. Interview: Angel Manfredy. Also: Mismatches, Bobby Czyz on watching fights.

March 1999: Exposed! Is Hamed Really Hector Camacho In Disguise? Color Pinup: Mike Tyson. Interview: Joe Frazier. Also: Zab Judah, Vuyani Bungu, Frankie Randall.

May 1999: The Tyson Of Old ... Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

June 1999: Will Tyson's Jail Time Be A Career Killer? Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Floyd Mayweather. Also: Roy Jones, 1999 Hall of Fame.

July 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: The Fight The Public Demands ... But Is It Going To Happen? Color Pinup: David Tua. Interview: Tommy Brooks. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Tony Marshall, best of the century.

Aug. 1999: Lewis vs. Holyfield II: Should We Expect Anything Different Next Time? Color Pinup: Fernando Vargas. Interview: David Reid. Also: Ibeabuchi-Byrd, Melissa Salamone.

Sept. 1999: Mayweather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Also: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

Oct. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Felix Trinidad. Interview: Jake LaMotta. Also: Tony Ayala, Erik Morales, Junior Jones.

Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Also: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Also: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, overhyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Also: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes. [FULL-COLOR BEGINNING FEBRUARY 2001]

Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

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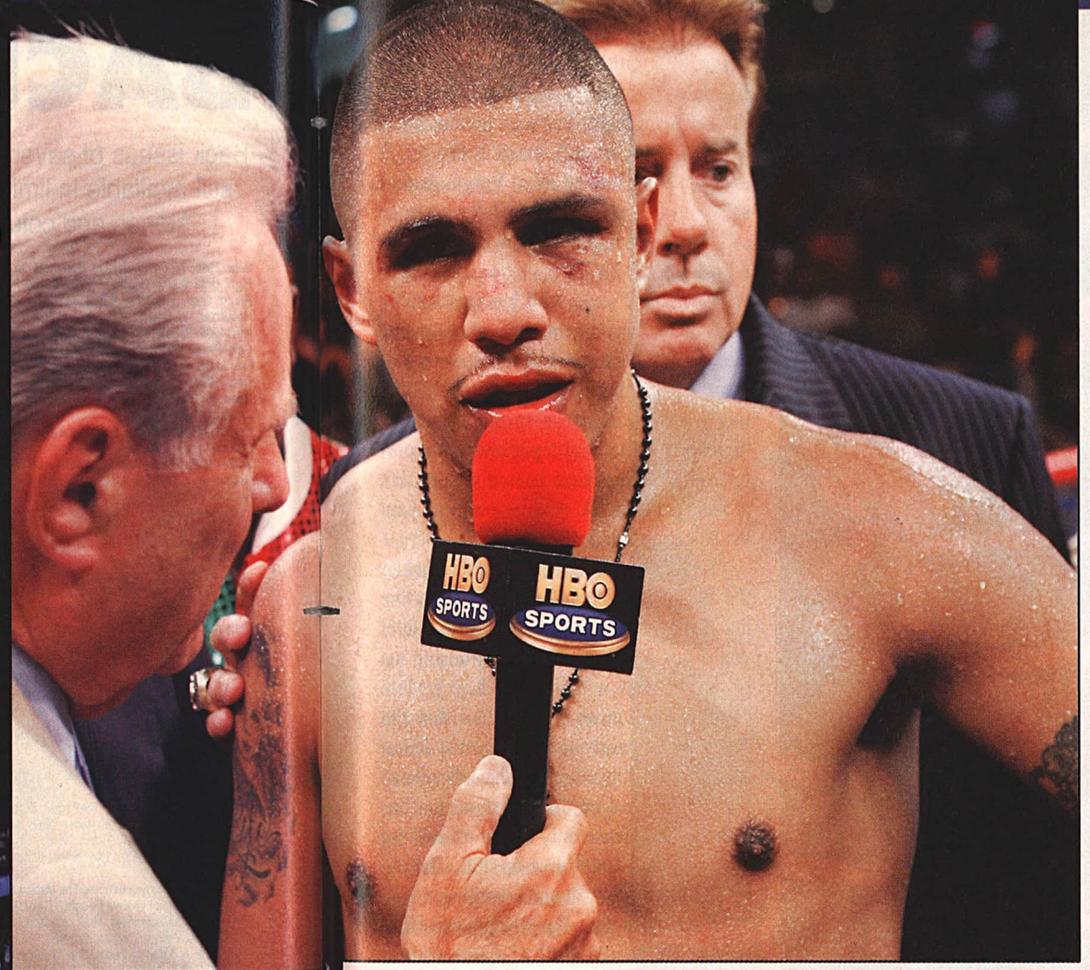
There was a marked contrast between the confident-looking Vargas who made a triumphant entrance into the ring for the Castillejo fight and the disappointed and lumpy-faced fighter who gave himself an F grade for his performance. Despite the fact Vargas tallied a 10-round decision, some think that he should go back to his former, aggressive style of fighting.



By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Fernando Vargas was treated like a star during the days leading up to his August 20 fight with Javier Castillejo. He threw out the first pitch at a Chicago Cubs game, took part in a special ceremony prior to a minor league game, and held an open workout attended by thousands of his die-hard followers.

"I honestly feel that there are no other fans like my fans," Vargas said, touched that so many had turned out just to watch him pound the pads. "They are crazy, they are mean, and they feel my energy. I am humbled by the way people love me. I love them back the same way."

But if Vargas wants to keep the romance going, he should consider sending his fans roses and chocolates. The 9,092 in attendance at The Allstate Arena in Rosemont, Illinois, weren't impressed with the safety-first technique Vargas has favored in recent fights. They let him hear the boos as early as the first round. After all, they'd paid to see "El Feroz," the passionate artist who had once slashed at

"El Feroz" Only Semi-Ferocious HAS NEW STYLE BACKFIRED ON VARGAS?

his canvas with vibrant colors, not some paint-by-numbers specialist. After the bout, when the verdict was announced in Vargas' favor, an ugly melee broke out in the stands. It looked as if Vargas hadn't satisfied the customers' need for violence so they started their own brawl.

Vargas, 26-2 (22), is obviously dedicated to his new style, and has unshakable faith in his current trainer and defensive tutor, Danny Smith. And there were moments during the fight when Vargas effectively mixed offense with defense. Still, there was something tepid about his performance. It may have been a victory, but it wasn't a triumph. And no one was happy. Not even Vargas.

"I give myself an F," Vargas said after the fight. The Oxnard, California, native has always been a tough self-critic, but if you'd just happened to tune in during his postfight chat with HBO's Larry Merchant, you'd think Vargas had lost the fight. He certainly looked like the loser, with a serious swelling on the left side of his jaw. It must be disheartening to concentrate on defense only to end up looking like an Arturo Gatti blow-up doll. The experiment in style isn't quite working.

"I don't like what I'm seeing," said HBO commentator and Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward. "I give Fernando a lot of credit. He's taken two terrific beatings, has a massive weight problem, and a back injury, and he keeps doing the best he can. But a fighter shouldn't make such drastic changes, especially when he was always a good technical fighter with a good amateur background."

The style a fighter uses is as much a part of him as his signature. A signature can't be changed without a lot of practice. Unfortunately, Vargas has to do his practicing in front of a paying audience that still thinks of him as the fiery kid of five years ago. Steward and Merchant debated during the fight whether Vargas' style change was necessary. Merchant believed so; Steward said it was an overreaction to his losses to Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya.

Vargas looked like his old self in the third round when he hurt Castillejo with a right and then knocked him down and partway through the ropes with a left hook. But the round-ending bell rang soon after the Spaniard beat referee Geno Rodriguez' count, and "El Feroz" never again came close to stopping his durable foe.

Given an opportunity to expand on his theory, Steward told THE RING: "In his fight with Trinidad, they both threw left hooks at the same time. Trinidad's landed first because Vargas didn't have his right hand up to protect himself. If Vargas had landed first, I strongly feel it would've been a different fight. Against Oscar, his preparation relied too much on weight lifting. That's why he had trouble keeping his hands up. But Vargas was never a careless, reckless fighter. The media and the fans are making a mistake when they remember him as a Micky Ward or a Gatti. I don't remember him that way. He was a good technical fighter, except for one exchange with Trinidad, and too much weight lifting for Oscar."

Steward believes Vargas' new approach will fail against opponents tougher than Castillejo.

"He needs to get back to the style that brought him success, with his hands up in position to attack, and block, and throw pinpoint combinations," said Steward. But even if Vargas returns to form, Steward said there aren't many fights left for him. "I think his career is winding down. I'd like to see him have one more great fight, win or lose, against Oscar. I think the warrior in him has one great fight left. He's not that shot."

Castillejo didn't just come to the United States to pick up a paycheck. He soon recovered from his third-round decking and fought back well enough to bloody Vargas' mouth and swell the side of his jaw.

Perhaps the two losses on Vargas' record had less to do with his defense than his not knowing how to react when hurt. Rather than work on the finer points of survival, however, Vargas has chosen to avoid getting hurt at all, which is something no fighter can control. But control is important to Vargas. It shows up in little ways, such as his children and security team all wearing matching clothes and identical haircuts. Everyone around him seems to be an advertisement for "Fernando Vargas." It doesn't take a psychologist to see Vargas' thinking. He came from a tumultuous, fatherless background, so he tries to maintain this feeling of unity by surrounding himself with a posse of look-alikes. But the emotion Vargas once wore on his sleeve is muted. Perhaps he feels his emotional nature cost him his two most important fights. Still, there's a difference between being in control, and being afraid of losing control. Against Castillejo, Vargas seemed like the latter.

Except for a flurry by Vargas at the end of the first, both fighters were cautious early. But after knocking Castillejo down late in the third, Vargas rushed out for the fourth, bulling into Castillejo and banging away. Possibly concerned about his stamina, Vargas then returned to his defensive shell and allowed Castillejo back into the fight.

Anyone who thought Castillejo, 58-6 (39), was only in Rosemont to collect a paycheck was wrong. During the next few rounds the 37-year-old veteran withstood

A nasty melee broke out after the fight that involved many of Vargas' posse, who can been seen wearing matching outfits. Police intervened and six people were arrested. It was an ugly end to a week that began as a Vargas lovefest.

Vargas' sporadic punching and fought back. By the sixth, Vargas' shoulders were speckled with blood from his own mouth. He seemed to fade in the seventh while the game Castillejo landed enough jabs and straight rights to keep himself alive on the scorecards. The customers jeered during the eighth, but near the end of the round Vargas planted his feet and rocked Castillejo with a half-dozen stiff punches that momentarily brought the crowd to its feet.

The ninth was close. Vargas landed some solid punches to Castillejo's body and head, but Castillejo landed some hard stuff too. By the round's end, Vargas' left cheek was noticeably puffy. Prior to the 10th, Smith warned Vargas to ignore the fans and stick to the game plan. And so he did, jabbing carefully and staying out of danger during the final three minutes as the jeers came down like a soft, steady rain.

Judges Steve Corbo and Ted Gimza scored the fight 97-92, while Mauro Di-Fiore had it 98-92, all for Vargas. The fight may not have been a classic, but it wasn't bad. And considering that Vargas is known for fighting in places where his blue collar fans can see him without paying Las Vegas prices, the heckling seemed petty and ungrateful. But according to Main Events' Matchmaker and Vice President Carl Moretti, the reaction was inevitable.

"The prior fight had the crowd going," said Moretti, referring to Humberto Soto's exciting upset win over Rocky Juarez. "And Castillejo's style is not particularly aggressive. When Fernando meets a more aggressive fighter, he'll do what he needs to do. If he needed that last round to win, he'd have gone out there and fought for it. So in cases like this, when the styles don't mesh, we're bound to hear some catcalling."

As for Vargas' own response to the fight, Moretti feels Vargas had wanted the knockout and was disappointed when he didn't get it. Moretti also noticed Vargas tiring late in the fight. "Fernando was sluggish because he dropped a lot of weight to make 154. But I give Castillejo credit. He could have stayed down in the third round, collected his money, and gone home. But he came back."

The cranky crowd and the swollen jaw were just the final aggravations of what had been a long, vexing promotion. The fight had originally been for the WBC junior middleweight belt which had belonged to Castillejo until this June when the organization stripped him for not fighting Ricardo Mayorga, a ridiculous notion since Mayorga had lost two of his last three fights and had never officially campaigned at 154. The title was declared vacant and on August 13 Mayorga defeated Michelle Piccirilo to fill the vacant spot. The Vargas-Castillejo bout was to determine the WBC's top contender, but Vargas' camp wouldn't follow the WBC's idiot logic and refused to accept the bout as a so-called eliminator. As fight time approached, Moretti downplayed the boxing politics, suggesting Castillejo was merely another tune-up "to see how Fernando's back was holding up."

Even though a bulging disc is like having a knife in your spine, Moretti insisted Vargas felt fine against Castillejo. But HBO's Jim Lampley thinks Vargas' back is worse than anyone is letting on.

"Fernando has never been blindingly quick, so combine that with a lack of sharpness and a bulging L5 disc, and he's just a good shadow boxer," said Lampley. "Moretti and Kathy Duva will tell him he's still a great fighter. They won't tell him it's only about one big paycheck. They don't want to tell him the hard truth. He's had enough of that in his life. But he's no dummy. He knows fighting with a bad back is risky, but this is a business situation. Everything he does in the ring reverberates into everything else he's trying to do, with his cell phone business and his clothing company. This is about extending the franchise for as long as they can. He may have been booed, but he was still on HBO being Fernando Vargas. But they should go for the main thing now. If there's a chance to fight Oscar De La Hoya for millions of dollars, why risk fighting someone else for one fifth of the money?"

Lampley sees some desperation on the part of Main Events.

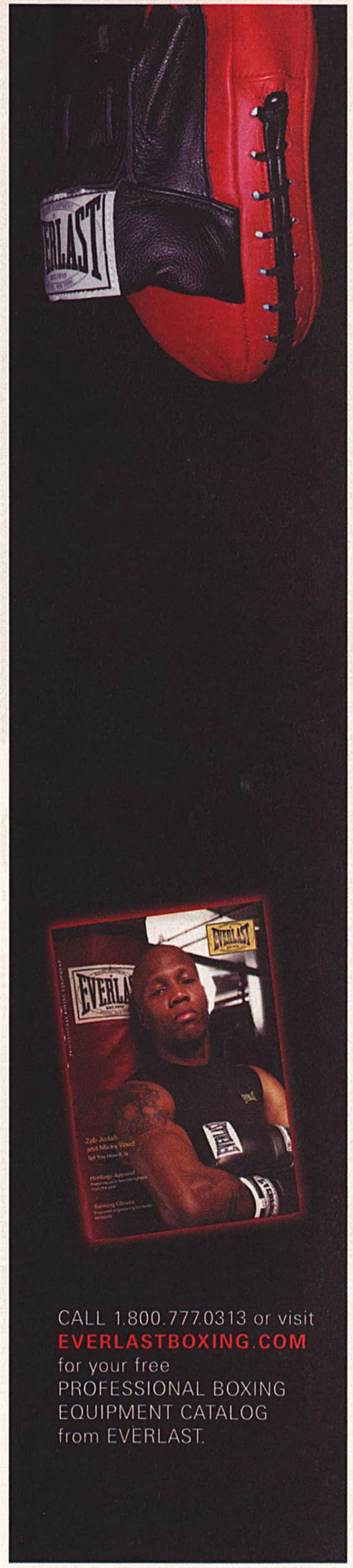
"They've always rushed Fernando, because they were scared that his life would foreclose his boxing career. Amazingly enough, his life has straightened out, and it's his boxing career that is foreclosing his boxing career."

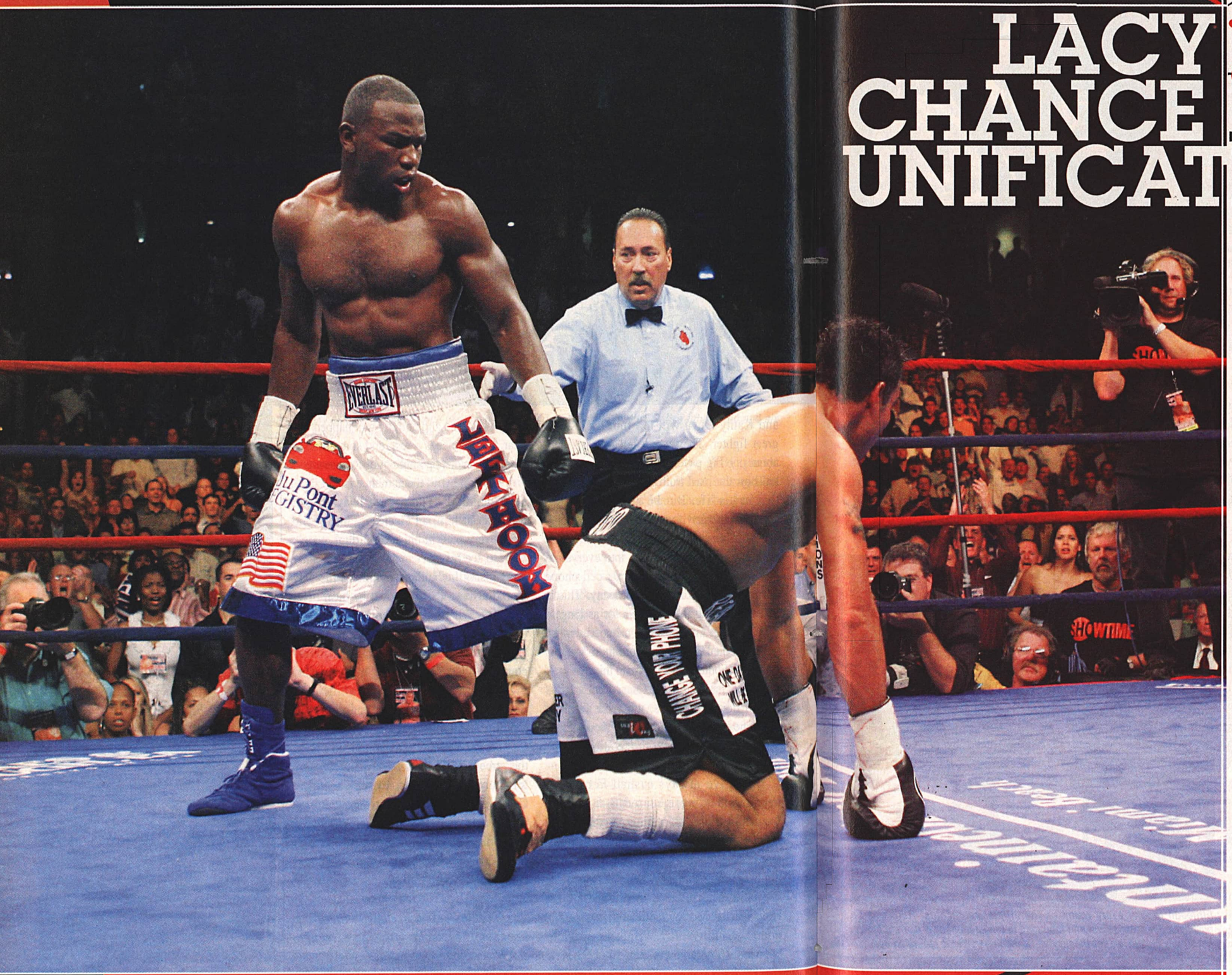
While Main Events mentioned De La Hoya, Shane Mosley, and THE RING's 154-pound champ Winky Wright as possible opponents for Vargas, nothing has been seriously discussed and nothing will happen this year. Vargas needs a rest, and some time to evaluate the disappointment of Rosemont.

"His bond with the audience is still big," said Lampley. "There was always something about him, an electricity that oozed from every pore in his body. I think people want to see his story continue. He certainly risks losing his audience fighting the way he did against Castillejo, but he hasn't lost them yet. What it's really about now is if he can recreate the magic for one big night."

We don't know if Vargas can overcome the difficulties facing him, but during the third round against Castillejo he did find a little of the old magic. After landing a crunching right to the side of Castillejo's head, Vargas reached back to the streets of Oxnard for a pair of nasty left hooks, the impact of which hurled Castillejo backwards onto the canvas. The crowd roared. Vargas sneered. No one would have guessed that 30 minutes later Vargas would be in a blue mood and the fans would be rioting. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine.





Lacy scores one of four knockdowns en route to an eighth-round TKO of Robin Reid in front of a large crowd in Tampa. The impressive victory elevated Lacy in the ratings and should lead to a showdown with Joe Calzaghe for the vacant super middleweight world title.

LACY HOOKS CHANCE AT UNIFICATION

Reid Kayo Sends Message To Calzaghe

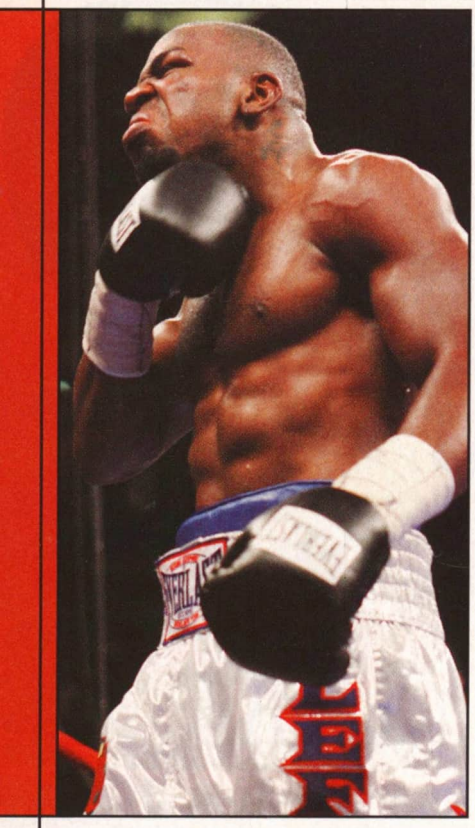
By Ed Maloney
PHOTOS BY SCOTT FOSTER

Every so often the heavens align themselves in a way that makes everything seem perfect down here on Earth. Life couldn't get any better for some people, or on the flipside, more foreboding for others. And whatever the future holds in store for undefeated super middleweight Jeff Lacy, it may be hard to top his dramatic seventh-round knockout of Robin Reid on August 6 in Tampa, Florida. It wasn't just his level of dominance over a world-class fighter; the local support he generated was equally impressive. Even more significantly, Lacy's emphatic victory set the wheels in motion for a bout with Joe Calzaghe for the vacant 168-pound world championship.

An unexpectedly large crowd of 15,056 at the St. Pete Times Forum set a new record for the St. Petersburg-Tampa bay area, topping the previous high of 14,223 for the Roy Jones-Derrick Harmon light heavyweight title fight in 2001. The fans turned out not just to cheer on the local hero, but to welcome him home as well. Lacy, who turned pro in 2001, had never before fought in the bay area as a pro, and the reception he received virtually guaranteed he'd be back.

Reid, 38-5-1 (27), was supposed to be Lacy's toughest challenge. The savvy veteran won a bronze medal for the United Kingdom at the 1992 Olympics, had already been a WBC titleholder at 168 pounds, and was one of the more durable fighters in the division. He had never been stopped or even knocked down in a 13-year pro career that includes six title fights and a tough 12-round decision loss to Calzaghe, currently THE RING's number-one super middleweight.

"When I fight Reid, the fans will be on the edge of their seats," Lacy said before the fight, which was televised by Showtime. "I



Lacy takes a page out of Bernard Hopkins' book and gives Reid the throat-slashing sign prior to the start of their bout. While Lacy is a nice guy outside of the ring, he is a ruthless assassin once the opening bell rings.

The dangerous left hook that gave Lacy his nickname is far from the only weapon in his arsenal. The Florida fighter also has an effective left jab, which he put to good use against his British rival.

know he comes to fight and he is going to bring it to me. I love that."

Outside the sentiments of the hometown crowd, there was no love in the arena. The fighters' style clashed almost from the get-go. There were as many shoulder-to-head collisions as clean punches landed during the first three rounds, as the fighters tried to establish control, mainly on the inside.

The local media played up Lacy's "Left Hook" nickname during the prefight coverage, but Reid didn't bite.

"Yeah, he has a good left hook, but it's not like a Joe Frazier left hook," Reid said. "It's either a big clue or is he trying to kid you into thinking that's what his big punch is."

Unfortunately for Reid, he found out firsthand that his foe's *nom de guerre* isn't just a marketing tool. With about 20 seconds left in the fourth round, which until that point had been his strongest of the night, the Englishman got tagged by a hard left hook to the head. Lacy then unleashed a barrage of punches while Reid tried to hold on. He was only partially successful, as Lacy scored with heavy hooks to the body that had Reid unsteady and the fired-up crowd on its feet at the bell.

Any chance of Reid springing an upset disappeared midway through the fifth round in a bizarre sequence of events that saw Reid on the deck for the first time in his career and also having a point deducted for headbutting. Referee Jorge Alonso, who had previously warned Reid on several occasions for excessive holding, headbutting, and low blows, ordered the fighters to break. But when Reid stepped back, Lacy, 167, dropped him with an overhand right. Most ringsiders were shocked when Alonso started counting, since it was clear that Lacy had thrown the punch *after* he was commanded to break.

Reid, 167½, appeared unhurt and action resumed. Then, with 10 seconds to go in the round, Lacy connected with a hard left jab and unleashed a brutal eight-punch combo, punctuated by a right to the head that dropped Reid again at the bell.

Reid's tactics in the sixth contradicted both his pre- and post-fight assessment of Lacy's power. The man dubbed "The Grim Reaper" tried to avoid the seemingly inevitable by using lateral movement and trying to keep his distance, but Lacy connected with a hard left-right combination followed by another overhand right that dropped Reid.

Reid survived the round, but trainer Brian Hughes recognized the gravity of the situation and told his fighter he needed to turn things around in the seventh or he'd stop the fight. Reid didn't. Hughes did, after his charge absorbed a lopsided beating that saw him dropped for the fourth time (right uppercut) and have another point deducted by

Although he lost every round on the official scorecards, Reid was no pushover. He came to win and managed to land a number of scoring blows, but simply lacked the consistency and punching power to spring an upset.

the officious Alonso (holding). Reid was reeling at round's end, and Hughes informed the referee between rounds that his man was finished for the night.

With the exception of the first round, which saw little action, Lacy showed superior ring generalship, controlling the fight on the inside and at a distance. He scored with single as well as multiple jabs and big overhand rights. On the inside, where he did most of his damage, left hooks to the body and head along with vicious uppercuts delivered with both hands had their desired effect.

Perhaps the only person in Tampa that night who claimed not to be impressed was Reid, who seemed reluctant to give props to the only man to ever stop him.

"I've fought Calzaghe and Lacy, and I can tell you Calzaghe's hand speed is far superior to Lacy's," said Reid. "Joe will also be much too strong for Lacy. I was surprised how I could easily push Lacy around the ring. For all his reputation, Lacy is nowhere near as strong as Joe and will get beat inside the distance."

Perhaps Reid was so truculent because prior to the fight Lacy's people presented him with a T-shirt that read, "I went all the way to America, and all I got was knocked out by Jeff Lacy." But whatever the story, there was no denying that he not only suffered the first four knockdowns of his career, he lost *every* round and was trailing 70-57 on all three judges' scorecards. True, the margins would not have been so wide without referee Alonso's overly fussy handling of the fight, but the outcome wouldn't have been any different.

Lacy, 20-0 (16), demonstrated that there's a lot more in his toolbox than a left hook. He showed an improved jab that produced openings. He also displayed an effective body attack and a much-improved defense. Furthermore, Lacy demonstrated the ability to handle the pressure of a big fight before hometown fans. Even though Lacy was a 4-to-1 betting favorite, his camp had some legitimate concerns going in.

Originally, Lacy's promoter, Gary Shaw, didn't want to bring the fight to Tampa, but agreed at Lacy's insistence. Shaw, who also promotes St. Petersburg's Winky Wright, was aware of the potential hazards and additional headaches a hometown fight pose. Using his own experience to his advantage, Shaw did his best to minimize those factors.

"I've been in fights where the fighter loses focus," said Shaw, "especially with friends and relatives bugging the local attraction for tickets. We agreed from Day One, no tickets, zero."

Lacy has another advantage over other boxers when it comes to minimizing distractions: He doesn't have a posse. He spent the days and weeks leading up to the fight with three people, trainer Dan Birmingham and strength and conditioning coaches Keith Stewart and Darryl Hudson. The gym also had a sign posted out front telling people to stay away.

Lacy rips Reid with a right uppercut, but despite suffering the first kayo loss of his career, the loser claimed he wasn't that impressed with Lacy and that Calzaghe, whom Reid has also fought, would beat the IBF 168-pound titleholder because he is stronger and has quicker hands.

Although he'd never before been down as a pro, Reid found himself on the canvas four times against Lacy. Reid's trainer stopped the fight at the end of the eighth round to spare his fighter additional abuse.

"I think I trained harder for this fight than I did for my world title shot," Lacy said. "I don't think a lot of fighters are 100 percent when they're fighting at home. They figure the crowd is going to lift them up and fill that gap for not doing what they have to do in training. I trained to be 100 percent and the crowd took me to an even higher level. I didn't know there was going to be 15,000 people. I just knew there were a lot of people when I walked into the arena. It made me happy, man. Everybody came out and supported me, and right then and there I decided I was going to give these people something they can go home and talk about. That's what I did."

The energy in the Forum as well as during the prefight buildup also changed Shaw's thinking. He's now considering making Wright's next bout a hometown event. Moreover, the promoters of the third Antonio Tarver-Roy Jones fight decided to move the October 1 bout to Tampa after seeing the welcome mat rolled out for Lacy.

One of nine children, Lacy was not the only boxer in the family. His father, Hydra, competed in the 1968 U.S. Olympic Trials and had a brief pro career. Due to an assortment of health problems, Hydra had been unable to attend any of his son's previous pro bouts, but was ringside for this one.

"Watching my brothers made me want to stay away from trouble," said Lacy, who has two older brothers that spent time in jail. Even so, he could not avoid fighting, especially at school. So, his father sent Jeff to a gym when he was eight years old.

"They put me in with a kid smaller than me," Lacy recalled. "I started throwing punches, and he moved around. I kept waiting for him to stop, but he didn't. When I got tired, he came at me and beat my butt."

That unknown kid was perhaps the last to inflict such a beating on Lacy, who went on to win National and P.A.L. championships, secure a berth on the 2000 Olympic team, and finish the amateur portion of his career with a reported 209-12 record.

Now, with three IBF title defenses under his belt, Lacy wants to earn his place in boxing lore. Shaw and Calzaghe's promoter, Frank Warren, agreed to a November 5 showdown in England, although all of the details had not been finalized when this issue went to press.

"I want to unify the super middleweight division," said Lacy, who rose to the number-three spot in THE RING ratings on the strength of the Reid victory. "I don't want to fight anyone who isn't holding a title. I need something to focus on. I can't train if I have nothing to win."

The 33-year-old Calzaghe, 39-0 (31), also got the outcome he wanted.

"I'm delighted that Lacy won and is still undefeated," he said. "This sets up our showdown to be a real superfight."

WBO titlist Calzaghe may not have fought for a major world title, but he has wins over noteworthy opponents Richie Woodhall (KO 10), Charles Brewer (W 12), and Byron Mitchell (KO 2), and is looking forward to fighting the younger American.

It remains to be seen how long Lacy's boxing universe remains perfect. Was his performance against Reid the pinnacle of his career or the night he took it to a higher level on the way to greater glory? Can he top a night in which he won every round en route to a dramatic knockout and also demonstrated that he was a major box-office draw? The only thing standing in Lacy's way is another undefeated fighter who feels just as confident.

"I'm a completely different fighter than Reid," Calzaghe said. "I'm even more confident of beating Lacy now."

We'll find out which one of them is correct soon enough. And best of all, regardless of who wins, boxing will have a legitimate world champion at 168 pounds. ■

Ed Maloney is a columnist for World Boxing and an occasional contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe is holding up the correct finger, as THE RING currently rates him number one at super middleweight. He is expected to fight lacy in November, most likely in either England or Wales.

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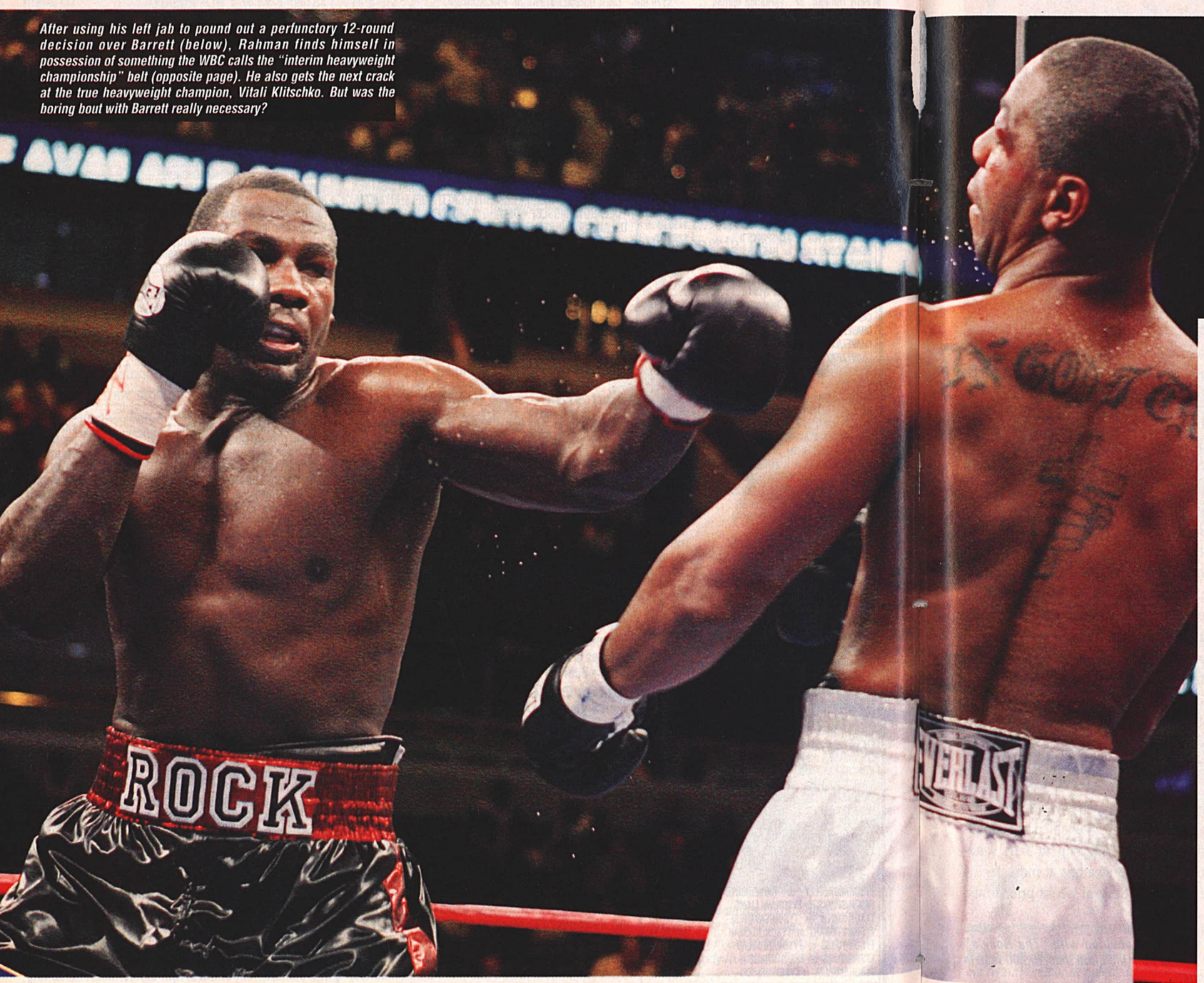
An Unappetizing Heavyweight Hors d'oeuvre

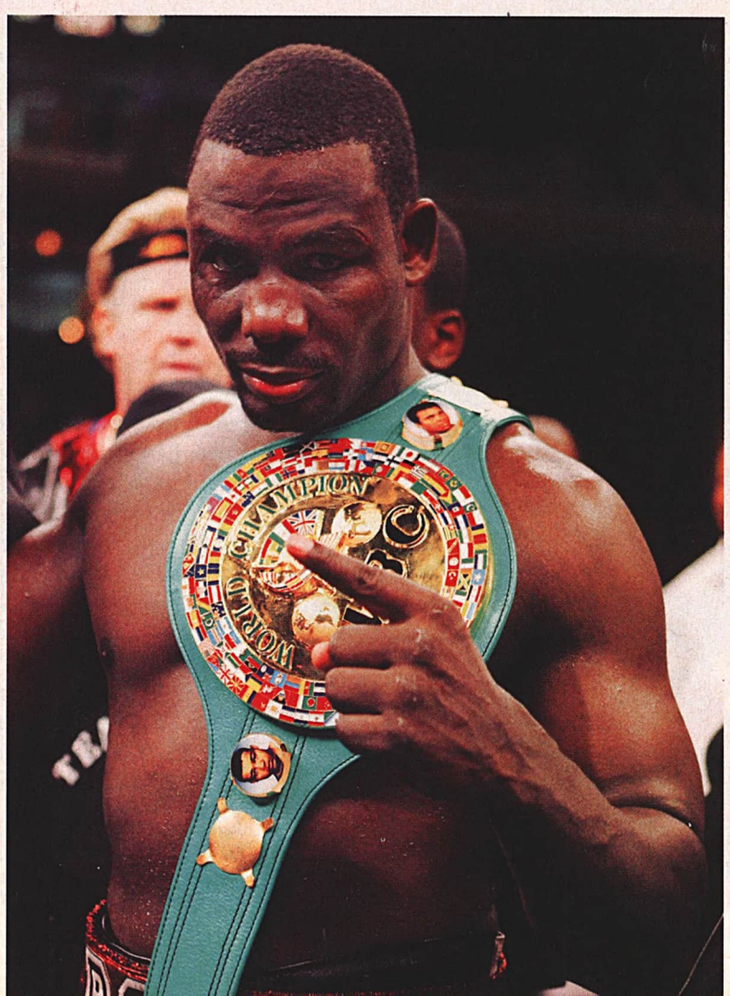
WILL RAHMAN-KLITSCHKO PROVE MORE PALATABLE?

After using his left jab to pound out a perfunctory 12-round decision over Barrett (below), Rahman finds himself in possession of something the WBC calls the "interim heavyweight championship" belt (opposite page). He also gets the next crack at the true heavyweight champion, Vitali Klitschko. But was the boring bout with Barrett really necessary?



By Joseph Hoff
PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

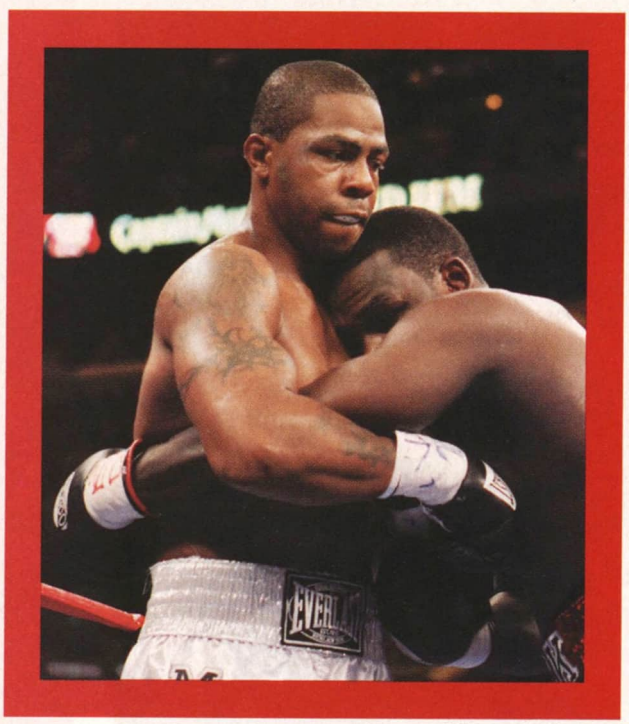
Heavyweight championship glory burns with the intensity of a flame that dances tantalizingly in the dark, just out of reach. A fighter climbs and climbs until he can feel its warmth, and then he reaches out and grabs for it. More often than not, he's consumed by the blaze, but even for those



From time to time, Barrett tagged Rahman with some decent punches, but never really launched a sustained attack. The defensive-minded Barrett thought his ring generalship would be enough to impress the judges, but he was sadly mistaken.

talented enough to withstand the heat and claim the prize, the glory can be fleeting.

Just ask Hasim Rahman, who stood in the glow, albeit briefly, when he knocked out Lennox Lewis more than four years ago. Rahman would like to bask in the warmth again—only the second time around, he hopes to linger quite a bit longer.



Having crossed the threshold as a champion once before, Rahman has come almost full circle. He's rebuilt his record, navigated past an obstacle named Monte Barrett, and is poised to once again challenge for the title that he held for just eight months, before Lewis regained it with a knockout as emphatic as the one Rahman had inflicted upon him. Of course, Lewis is retired now, and Rahman is tentatively scheduled to challenge the Englishman's successor, Vitali Klitschko, on November 12.

One would think that the second climb would be smoother because experience should illuminate the way, shedding light on all of the snares and pitfalls that rise up on the path of a former champion. Rahman, however, has discovered otherwise. In recent months his climb seemed vague and shapeless, hovering like an unsubstantiated rumor of freedom for a prisoner in the midst of a lengthy sentence.

Rahman's bout with Klitschko was delayed three times due to Klitschko's back and thigh injuries. Frustrated by the postponements, Rahman's promoter, Don King, successfully petitioned the WBC to sanction Rahman versus Barrett as a "WBC interim heavyweight championship match," which enabled the alphabet organization to pick up an extra sanctioning fee while awaiting a more legitimate title fight. Several weeks prior to the

Part of Barrett's strategy was to tie up Rahman whenever he got too close for comfort. Barrett's defensive attitude, coupled with "The Rock's" plodding offense, prompted much booing from the more than 15,000 fans in attendance at Chicago's United Center.

August 13 Rahman-Barrett bout, Klitschko, after failing to get permission to have a voluntary defense, announced he was willing to fight the winner.

An absence of logic has plagued the entire process, so that the Rahman-Barrett bout was a lot like scarfing down a load of junk food before attending a banquet. That Klitschko, holder of THE RING heavyweight title, didn't simply tell the WBC to shove its belt is another mystifying example of a fighter placating an organization that does little except interfere with his career. But regardless of Klitschko's motivation for complicity, Rahman still fought Barrett, a friend for whom Rahman holds considerable regard, in order to do what he was already set to do: fight Vitali Klitschko.

Sadly, the Rahman-Barrett fight at Chicago's United Center did little to whet the public's appetite for the upcoming Rahman-Klitschko showdown. The fight was far from exciting and accompanied by the sounds of constant booing by the surprisingly large crowd of 15,101.

Barrett, who had earned the spot by knocking off previously undefeated prospects Dominick Guinn and Owen Beck, fought a defensive fight. He retreated and countered throughout most of the match, leaving Rahman with little choice but to give pursuit. "The Rock" dutifully chugged after Barrett and scored well with punishing left jabs, but the thunderous right hand that had cold-cocked Lewis was seldom in evidence.

"It was a tough fight in a different way," Rahman said. "He had a good game plan. He tried to move around, but I was in good shape. I got dinged; Monte is a good puncher."

Overall, Rahman dictated the pace of the fight. He forced Barrett, 224, back with his jab, but was unable to follow up with the sort of blows that once made him one of the most dangerous men in the division. Much of the time, Rahman, 234, seemed like a man who shuts the door but cannot lock it.

"I felt that my movement offset his aggressiveness," explained Barrett, who added that he thought such movement would count as ring generalship and sway the judges in his favor.

Barrett, 31-4 (17), did buckle Rahman's legs with a beautiful counter right

Rahman twists Barrett head sideways with a left hook, but the former heavyweight champion was unable to put together enough heavy blows to stop his rival. Whether or not the friendship between the contestants contributed to the lackluster nature of the fight is a matter of opinion.

in the second round and drilled him with another hard right in the 12th, but failed to capitalize. Overall, "Two Gunz" just didn't let his hands go frequently enough to offset Rahman's uninspiring but dogged work. Making matters worse for Barrett, his left eye was swollen almost shut for half of the fight.

Judges Mauro DiFiore and Nobuaki Urantani both scored it for Rahman by tallies of 118-110, while William Lerch had it closer at 116-112. Nobody called for a rematch.

It's hard to know how much the friendship between Rahman and Barrett played into the tepid nature of the contest. While both denied that camaraderie prevented him from launching an all-out offense, goodwill abounded both before and after the event and barbs were noticeably absent.

"Monte is my man and I've been watching him for a long time," said Rahman after improving his record to 41-5-1 (33). "Don't count him out. I know his tenacity. I know his drive."

Maybe. But the "drive" component seemed to be conspicuously missing from both men's game. The lackluster showing was made worse by its juxtaposition to the considerable effort put forth that same night by another of Lewis' old playmates—Oliver McCall. Yes, *that* Oliver McCall.

When Andrew Golota was injured and forced to withdraw from an undercard bout with Przemyslaw Saleta, King figured why not replace one loop job with another. Therefore, "The Atomic Bull," already scheduled to fight in the prelims, stepped in and replaced "The Foul Pole" against Saleta, 42-7 (21). Eager to take advantage of the unexpected opportunity, McCall, 45-8 (31), turned in his best performance in several years by blasting out the former European heavyweight champ at 2:40 of the fourth round.

McCall's finishing combination was better than anything witnessed in the main event. Roused from their seats, the fans responded to the resounding manner in which McCall dispatched his opponent with thunderous applause.

Oliver McCall drives a right hand into the jaw of Przemyslaw Saleta en route to a fourth-round kayo on the Rahman-Barrett card. Such a good showing from an old warhorse like McCall made the main event look even worse by comparison.

SURPRISE WINNER

The biggest surprise surrounding the upcoming Klitschko-Rahman heavyweight championship bout is that promoter Bob Arum beat out rival Don King with a purse bid of $12.1-million. It had been King, after all, who had banged the drums the loudest and had been foremost in the struggle to force a Rahman challenge.

Arum hasn't promoted a major heavyweight fight since George Foreman-Axel Schulz in 1995, and it took a lot of people by surprise that Top Rank even bid.

"First of all, we felt that if we could get it for the right price, it would be good value," said Todd duBoef, Arum's stepson and president of Top Rank. "So what if we don't have a horse in the race? This is like the old days when promoters didn't have long-term contracts with fighters. We're buying the event."

Did duBoef feel that the humdrum nature of the Rahman-Barrett fight detracted from the attraction of Klitschko-Rahman?

Arum outbids King to secure Klitschko-Rahman bout

"It has no baring on it," insisted duBoef. "I had no interest in Rahman-Barrett, and didn't even watch it. As far as we were concerned, Rahman-Barrett was a non-starter. The way we looked at it, there hasn't been a major heavyweight fight in about 18 months, and the fans are hungry for one. And if you're going to put on a heavyweight title fight, you should go with the linear champion, which is Klitschko."

Although Arum had promoted many heavyweight fights in the past, including 25 of Muhammad Ali's bouts, he soured on the big boys a decade ago.

"The heavyweights demanded so much money that they didn't leave much room for profit," Arum told the Los Angeles *Daily News*. "But I know that this is going to be a money-maker from the get-go. There is literally no risk here."

While Arum and duBoef sound very confident, the boxing consumer will, of course, make the final decision.

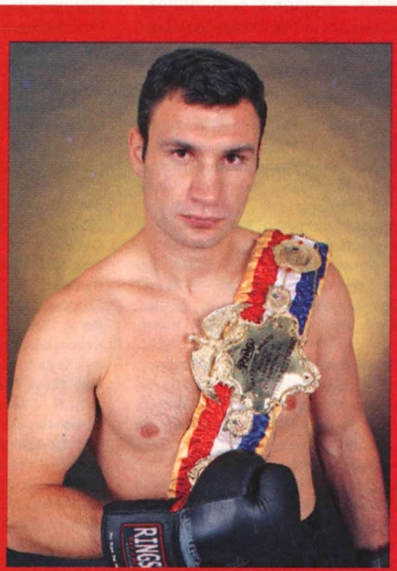
This is not to suggest that McCall deserves the crack at Klitschko instead of Rahman, but plenty of folks left the United Center thinking that McCall was the best heavyweight they'd seen that night. Most of the precious few that watched the Showtime pay-per-view, estimated at around 35,000, undoubtedly felt the same.

During the build-up to the Barrett fight, King's publicity machine, aided and abetted by sheep-like members of the media, churned out a lot of copy to the effect that Klitschko, 35-2 (34), was ducking Rahman and that his various injuries were just a ploy to avoid the match. While those accusations may or may not have been true, it's highly unlikely anything happened in the Barrett fight to further spook "Dr. Iron Fists." In fact, what took place probably boosted Klitschko's confidence regardless of his previous thinking.

So after many delays, Rahman will finally get to face Klitschko, a man for whom his feelings aren't so friendly as they are for Barrett. Maybe that will make a difference. While it didn't exactly look like he was carrying his buddy, Rahman certainly didn't demonstrate much passion for the job. Perhaps a knockout was beyond the 32-year-old ex-champ's capabilities, but barring a loss, it's hard to imagine a result that could have put a bigger damper on his upcoming crack at Klitschko.

Then again, Rahman has embarked on a similar journey before when he traveled to South Africa in April 2001. Back then, he was an even bigger underdog than he will be when he faces Klitschko, and still managed to spring the biggest heavyweight upset since Buster Douglas unmasked Mike Tyson in Tokyo. But if Rahman is to bask in the glow of the heavyweight title again, first he will have to rekindle the inner fire that burned so bright the night he kayoed Lewis. Against Barrett, the embers were barely glowing. ■

Joseph Hoff is a freelance writer based in Chicago and an occasional contributor to this magazine.



The prize that waits Rahman is heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko and THE RING belt, emblematic of a genuine world champion. Klitschko, who has recovered from back surgery, has agreed to fight Rahman in November.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

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☐ Jan/85 ☐ Feb/85 ☐ Mar/85 ☐ May/85 ☐ Jun/85 ☐ Aug/85 ☐ Oct/85 ☐ Nov/85 ☐ Dec/85 **All 9 $34**

☐ Jan/86 ☐ May/86 ☐ Jun/86

☐ Aug/86 ☐ Sep/86 ☐ Dec/86 **All 6 $25**

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☐ Jan/88 ☐ Feb/88 ☐ Mar/88 ☐ Apr/88 ☐ May/88 ☐ Sep/88 ☐ Oct/88 ☐ Nov/88 **All 8 $31**

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☐ Feb/90 ☐ Mar/90 ☐ Apr/90 ☐ May/90 ☐ Jun/90 ☐ Jul/90 ☐ Sep/90 ☐ Nov/90 ☐ Dec/90 **All 9 $34**

☐ Apr/91 ☐ Jun/91 ☐ Jul/91 ☐ Aug/91 ☐ Oct/91 **All 5 $22**

☐ Jul/92 ☐ Sep/92 ☐ Nov/92 **All 3 $14**

☐ Feb/93 ☐ Apr/93 ☐ May/93 **All 3 $14**

☐ Aug/94 ☐ Dec/94

☐ May/95 ☐ Oct/95

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☐ May/01 ☐ Jun/01 ☐ Jul/01 ☐ Aug/01 ☐ Sep/01 ☐ Oct/01 ☐ Dec/01 **All 10 $37**

☐ Jan/02 ☐ Mar/02 ☐ May/02 ☐ Jun/02 ☐ Jul/02 ☐ Aug/02 ☐ Sep/02 ☐ Oct/02 ☐ Nov/02 **All 9 $34**

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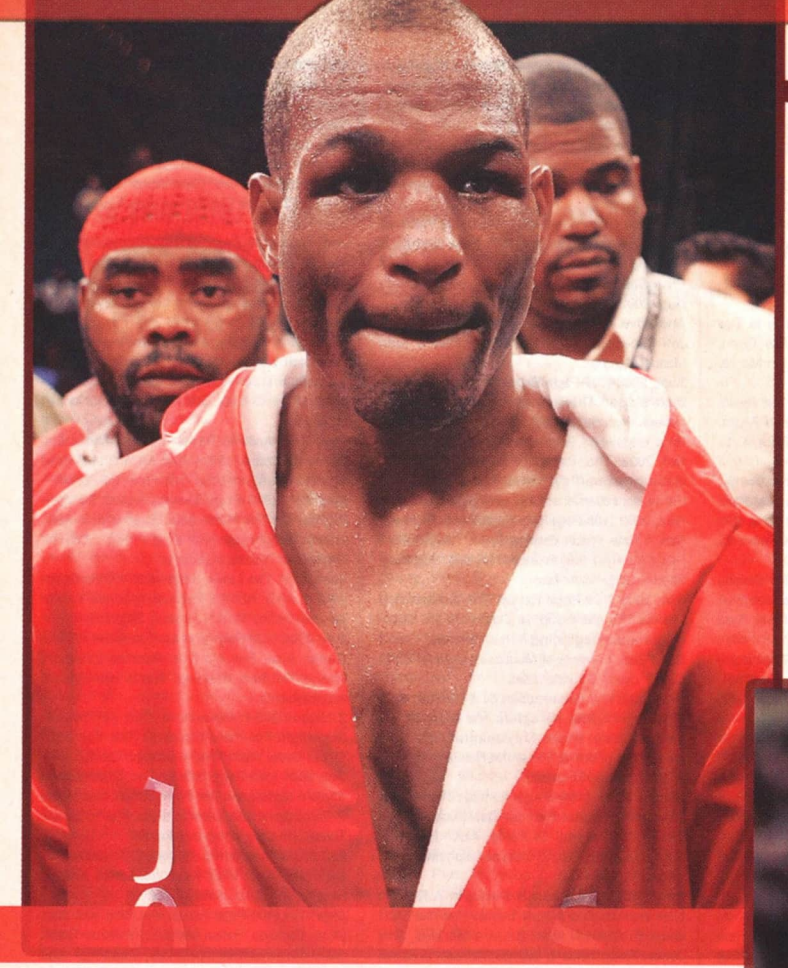
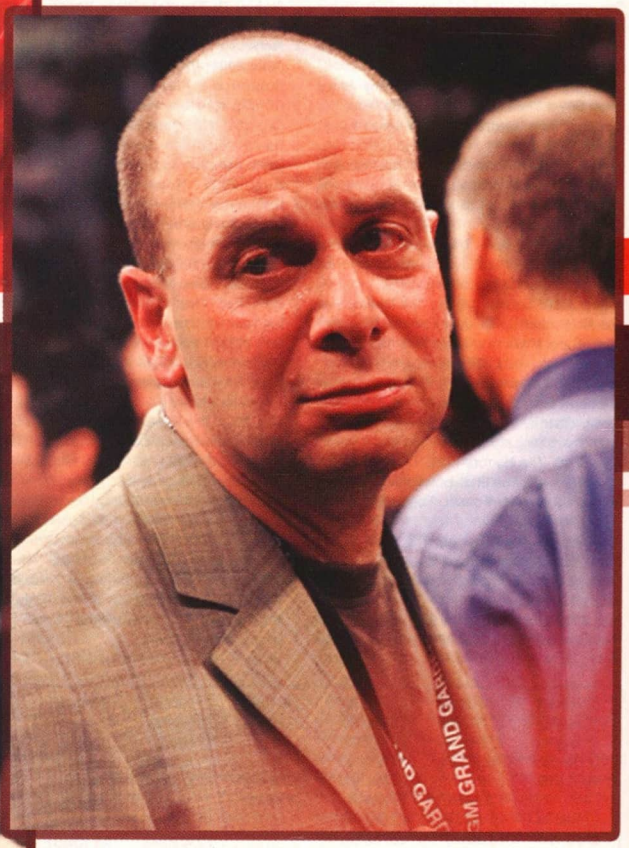


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

At the conclusion of the Taylor-Hopkins fight, none of the major players was in a festive mood. Taylor (bottom left) admitted he wasn't pleased with his late-round fade, Hopkins (left) felt he'd been robbed of the middleweight title, and promoter Lou DiBella (below) was first worried sick that his man had lost and then angry that Taylor didn't get the credit he felt he deserved.



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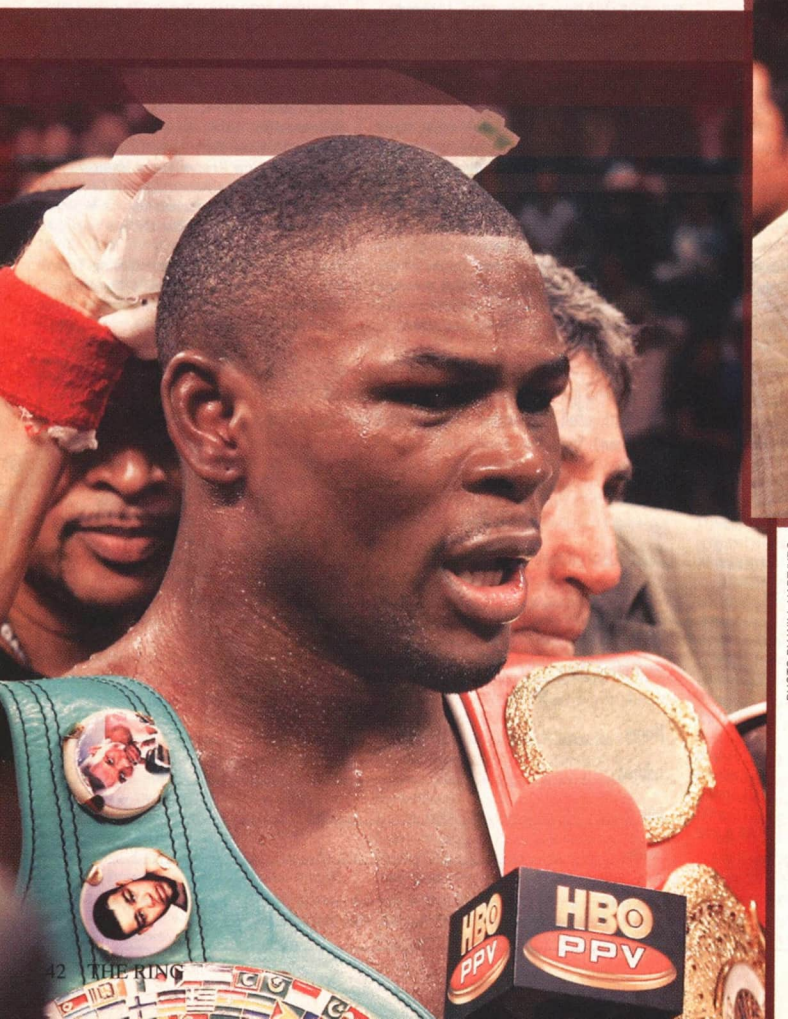


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

THE FIGHT THAT MADE NOBODY HAPPY

Further Thoughts On The Contentious Taylor-Hopkins Contest

By William Dettloff

Our parents told us violence never solves anything. You remember the rap: Use your brain to resolve conflicts, not your fists. When there's a fight, there are only losers, no winners—no one goes home happy. It sounded reasonable. What did we know?

Then we found the fight game, where violence is, well, good. (Try having a fight without it.) It was the one place where there could be a good, hard slugfest with violence galore and everything that comes with it—sweat, blood, drama, courage, occasional projectile vomiting—and everyone benefited: the winner, the fans who saw it, even the loser, so long as he fought well and got paid. The valiant loser and all that. It was our parents' truth turned inside out: After a good fight, everyone goes home happy.

The Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins fight was supposed to produce a clear-cut result that would make most of us happy. If Taylor fought well and dominated Hopkins, we'd have discovered a new king of the middleweights and maybe a future star. If Hopkins had spanked him and shown clearly that he was still in charge at 160, we'd be looking forward maybe to a Hopkins end-of-career superfight against Antonio Tarver or Winky

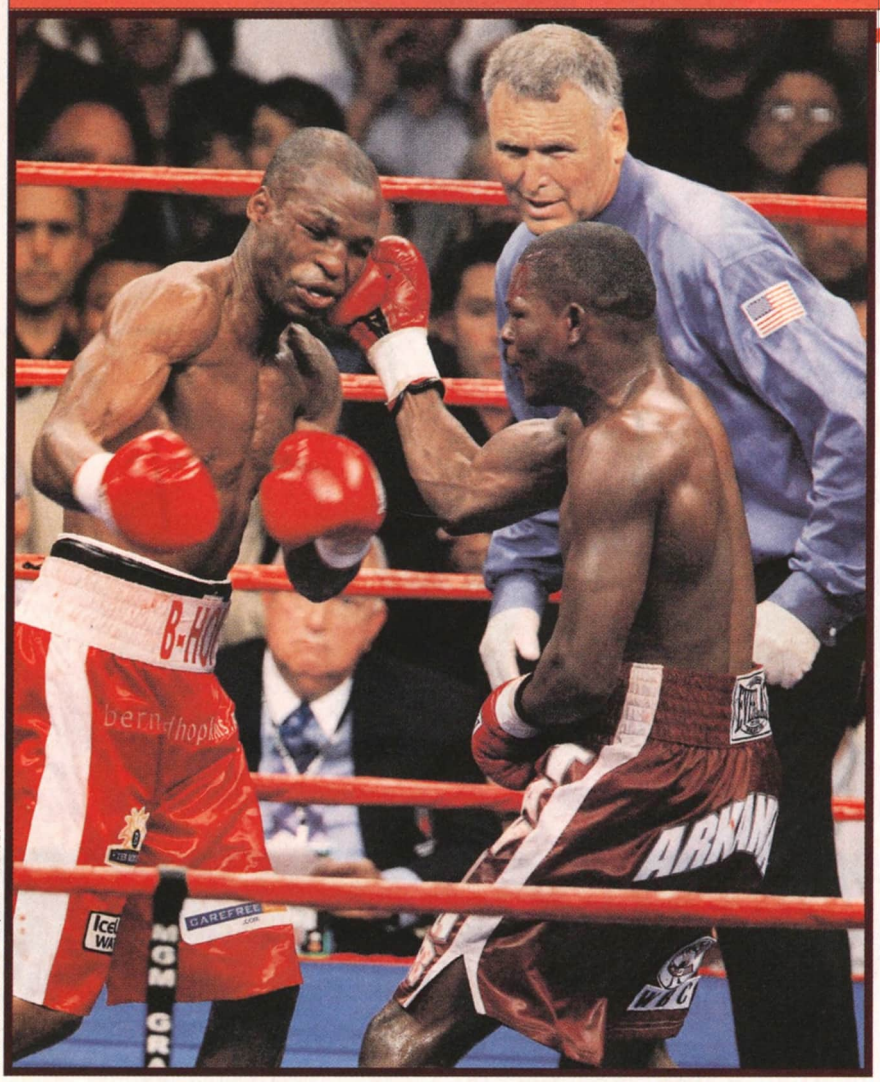


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor forced the fight in the early rounds, and while he never had Hopkins in any sort of trouble, he did land some good punches, including this right that landed flush on the side of "The Executioner's" face. Still, according to CompuBox, B-Hop had an advantage in power connects.

Wright or maybe even Roy Jones. Neither happened, of course, and as a result this enthusiastically anticipated matchup bears the ignominious distinction of being the fight that made no one happy.

Improbably, it is perhaps Taylor, the winner, who is among the least happy, primarily because many believe he didn't deserve the decision. For every person who says Hopkins simply started too late, you can find another (or two) who says the old man landed the better punches throughout the fight and that Taylor's greater activity level was ineffectual. The great majority of ringside press had Hopkins winning, several by four rounds or more, and letters to THE RING's editorial offices have been running roughly three-to-one in favor of Hopkins. That's not a view shared by everyone, of course.

"I don't give a f___ about the ringside press, they were all talking to each other," hollered Taylor's promoter, Lou DiBella, who with little provocation could get into a shouting match with a coat hanger. "That happens all the time on press row. And THE RING has always been very pro-Hopkins, so it doesn't surprise me that their readers favor him." DiBella reminded THE RING that an on-line ESPN poll taken on the same day that Hopkins co-hosted a *Friday Night Fights* card indicated that a majority of fans thought Taylor won.

"This was not a controversial fight, but a close fight," DiBella said. "But look at it this way: Oscar De La Hoya quit on his knees from a bodyshot—not even a shot to the liver. Tito Trinidad had to have his daddy run into the ring to save him. Jermain *beat* him."

That is the case officially, but there is enough room for doubt. Taylor created some of that doubt when he nodded in agreement when judge Jerry Roth's score of 116-112 for Hopkins was announced. (Though to be fair, we should note that fighters are never the best judges of their own fights. Whether or not Taylor believed he won is irrelevant, but that image serves as fuel for those who dispute the decision.) Taylor didn't help himself either during the postfight on-camera interview; he spent most of it apologizing for his performance. "I burned a little too much energy in those first few rounds and I got a little winded on the end stretch," he told HBO's Larry Merchant. "I wasted a lot of energy chasing him around and I should have been cutting off the ring."

More disheartening is that even Taylor's most ardent supporters concede that he was beaten soundly over the last four rounds, that it was only the lead he built early in the bout that allowed him to withstand Hopkins' late surge. Indeed, if not for judge Duane Ford's mind-boggling decision to award the final round to Taylor—a round even Hopkins' detractors concede he won—the bout would have been ruled a draw and the story being written much different.

And even if one agrees with the decision, and certainly many do, it must be terribly discomforting for Taylor to recall that history's most memorable champions, a club whose membership he earnestly desires, did not limp into their title reigns as he has limped into his. Think of Foreman destroying Frazier, Clay whipping Liston, Louis blowing away Braddock, or Dempsey slaughtering poor Willard. Or, for that matter, Hopkins bludgeoning Segundo Mercado.

Although he waited too long to throw his attack into high gear, once he got rolling, Hopkins connected well with his left jab (below) and also rocked Taylor a few times with right hands to the head (right). It was B-Hop's late rally that prompted many fans and media members to believe that he'd done enough to retain the title.

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Many champions never perform as well defending the championship as they did winning it. Put another way, great title reigns start with a bang, not a whimper.

A refrain heard in many circles afterward offered too that had the fight been scheduled for 15 rounds instead of 12 (we'll never let go of that dream, will we?), Hopkins would have won outright. The subtle implication here is that Hopkins didn't really lose to Taylor at all, but to the clock. He simply ran out of time.

It's not just the late-round fade that was bad for Taylor. He didn't fight particularly well even in the rounds he won. Whatever number of rounds you believe that was—some say eight, others say five or six—most would agree that he won them by virtue of his greater activity, which is a nice way of saying he didn't do much, but it was more than Hopkins did.

Whatever the case, Taylor is the world middleweight champion but is a long way from being ecstatic about how he came to be such. In the weeks after, he found himself in the obviously uncomfortable position of having to taunt Hopkins to "stop crying about it," and "be a man" about the loss. It was clearly out of character. He was much more convincing immediately after the fight when he spoke of how much Hopkins had taught him and what a wonderful champion he'd been.

Of course, DiBella is unhappy for the same reasons that Taylor is, but try getting him to admit it. His long and bitter

history with Hopkins has left little room for diplomacy and at the same time a stubbornness against saying anything that might give Hopkins a moment's satisfaction. He is willing to admit that he'd have been happier had Taylor won more decisively—or, one presumes, evicted a couple of teeth from Hopkins' head—but he sticks fiercely to the win-win story-line people to which people in sports promotion typically cling. "We're happy with the win," he said. "We won, but the kid was disappointed because he knew he could perform better. He's got a lot more in his arsenal than he showed that night. Either way it's a whole lot more satisfying to win than it is to lose."

DiBella also explains Taylor's post-fight demeanor by saying, "People misunderstood his reaction at end of fight. It wasn't that he didn't think he won. He was disappointed with his performance. He knew he faded and he knew he could do better. He was disappointed with himself because he knows he can do better. And he will on December 3 (the proposed date of the rematch).

"He's a kid, a baby, and he's still learning," DiBella continued. "And there's a lot to be said for the fact that the kid said he can do better. That will serve him better in the rematch and later. The kid is the undisputed champ and he fought a great fight. He dominated the first eight rounds. Yes, Hopkins won the last four rounds, but you can't win a fight not throwing punches for the first eight rounds. To give Hopkins more than one or two rounds [out of the first eight] is impossible."

Hopkins, being Hopkins, has played well the role of martyred hero. His reaction immediately after the fight was one of stunned acceptance. "From the fifth or sixth round, I just dominated the fight," he said, a look of something like bewildered amusement on his face. "Maybe the only thing I didn't do was knock him out. It wasn't like when I lost to Roy Jones and I knew I lost. This is a situation where I won and they gave it to the other guy."

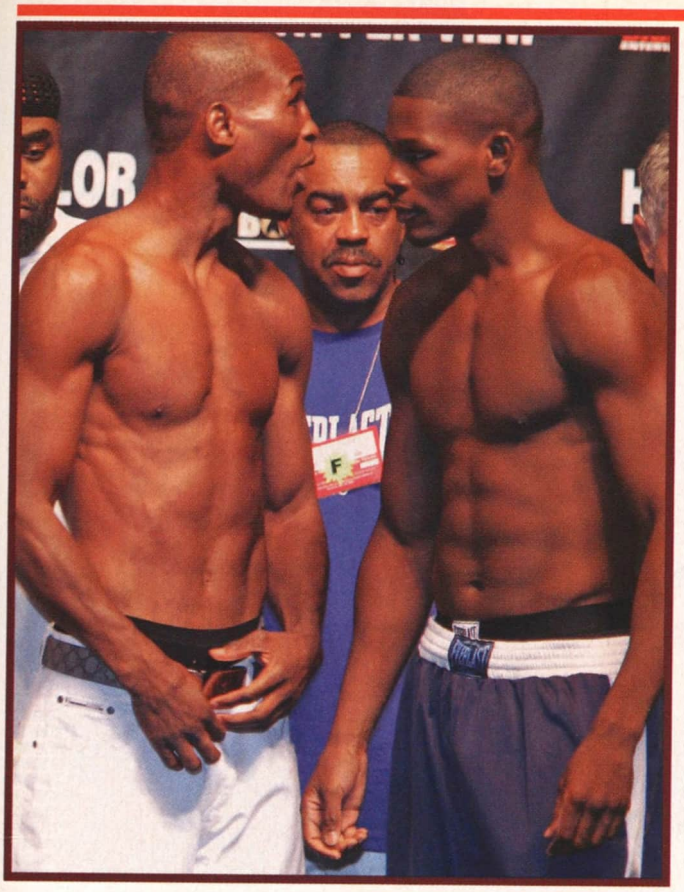
In the days and weeks following the fight, Hopkins continued his diatribe against the judging, filing an appeal to the Nevada State Athletic Commission (which was promptly denied), but at the same time he seemed to enjoy being something he never was before: a sympathetic figure. He was always the iconoclast, the agitator, the lone middle finger in a sea of angry but largely quiet fists. Hardly sympathetic.

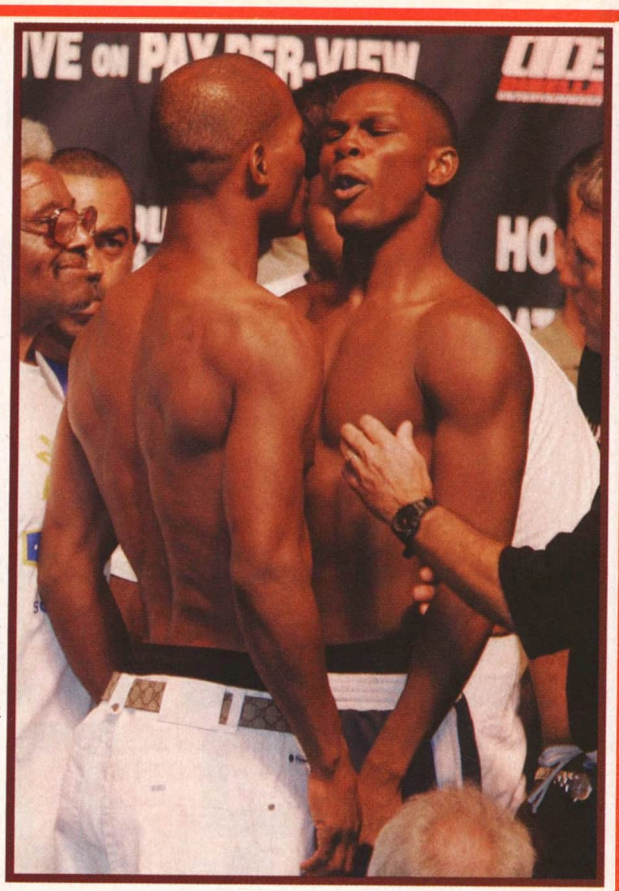
Hopkins' game was beating the establishment: suing promoters and winning, outlasting and outfoxing Don King, sticking it to HBO and the suits who made decisions about his life. This time, and from his point of view at least, he'd been the one stuck rather than the one doing the sticking. He almost seemed to enjoy the attention it spawned.

But those who know Hopkins know that he's smarter than anyone thinks he is and he does everything for a reason and with a plan in mind. While playing the role of wronged victim, he was

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Even though the action picked up down the stretch, there was way too much clinching and standing around to make Taylor-Hopkins a fan-friendly fight. Hopefully, the close and controversial nature of the first fight will convince both men to fight with more urgency and enthusiasm in the rematch.





PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

In what could turn out to be a classic case of foreshadowing, Hopkins and Taylor take turns barking at one another at the weigh-in. If you think the ill will and trash talk were bad for the first fight, wait until the buildup to Taylor-Hopkins II begins.

expertly working behind the scenes to try to convince the editors of this magazine to continue to recognize him as the middleweight champion, presumably because of the controversial nature of the decision. When his request was declined, what has always been a hot-and-cold relationship with Hopkins turned cold again. What will become of it in the future is anyone's guess.

At any rate, it would be an understatement of significant proportions to say that Hopkins is unhappy with his current situation. And not just about losing his long stranglehold on the middleweight title, but about losing it the way he did. If he were overwhelmed and beaten up, or laid out, like Jones was by Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson, one could easily envision him adopting an "Oh well, it's my time to go" attitude and walking proudly into retirement. But to a guy like Hopkins, losing this way, on a close decision, must be something close to unbearable. In his world, the bad guys have won. The suits got the best of him. That's got to hurt.

Of all the players involved, the fans have as much reason as anyone to be unhappy, and not for just the obvious reasons. Yes, fans of Taylor are unhappy because their man isn't getting the recognition they believe he deserves. And Hopkins fans are unhappy because they believe he was ripped off. But here's what hurts the most: More than 11,000 fans showed up at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and they got a lousy card and a lousy fight. The 350,000 or so who bought the show from HBO PPV saw a portion of the same lousy card and the same lousy main event and paid $50 for it.

You could argue that the buyer should beware; except for the Trinidad thrashing, Hopkins hasn't been in an exciting bout since Antwun Echols could still fight a little, and that's going back a while. And Taylor was never matched hard enough on the way up to be challenged, so we didn't know if he could be exciting. Sure, he knocked out a lot of guys, but not in the way that made most of us get all weak in the knees. So you had to think going in that it might be a stinker. And was it ever.

The CompuBox numbers told the story: The two threw a combined 779 punches. (Back in the day, Ray Oliveira did that in a round or two.) Of those, 182 landed. Hopkins landed 78 power-punches—76 of them in the last three rounds it seemed—and Taylor, a paltry 50. There was not a lot of action. There were long stretches when both fighters stood and gawked at one another. And despite the blood that spewed from the blowhole a Hopkins headbutt created on Taylor's scalp, there wasn't much drama until very late, when Hopkins raced against creeping arthritis to try to get Taylor out of there.

If there was one party that was happy with the Taylor-Hopkins fight, it was HBO PPV. According to Mark Taffett, HBO senior vice president of sports, the fight grossed $17.5 million in PPV revenue.

And after all this, we wait, mouths watering, for the rematch. You've got to think the sequel will make a few people happy. Not everyone, but a few. If not, it can only mean one thing: Our parents were right. ■

Pitchman ... Preacher ... Painter ... Porn Star?

WHAT'S A FORMER BOXER TO DO?

By Don Stradley

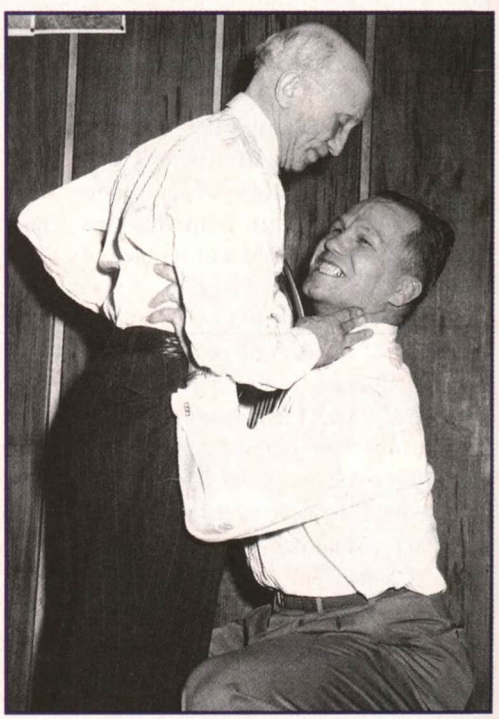
There were plenty of rumors about Mike Tyson this summer, but the most amusing one involved the former champ negotiating to star in a porn flick with adult film icon Jenna Jameson. Fans who had believed Tyson's previous talk about helping the needy must have been shocked, but just when it seemed Tyson would skip missionary work in favor of the missionary position, Jameson's representatives killed the rumor. A spokesman for Tyson also denied the story.

The reality is that the porn industry couldn't pay Tyson enough to cover his jet-ski violations, never mind help with his massive debt. Still, it wasn't hard to imagine Tyson, a guy who once feared he was too ugly to ever have a girlfriend, being seduced by pornographers. After all, Tyson's weird sex-life has always been part of his mystique. Quicker than you could say Mandingo, the Internet was buzzing with hastily written reports that were soon recanted. It was amazing that so many imbeciles were actually interested in seeing Tyson's pimply backside.

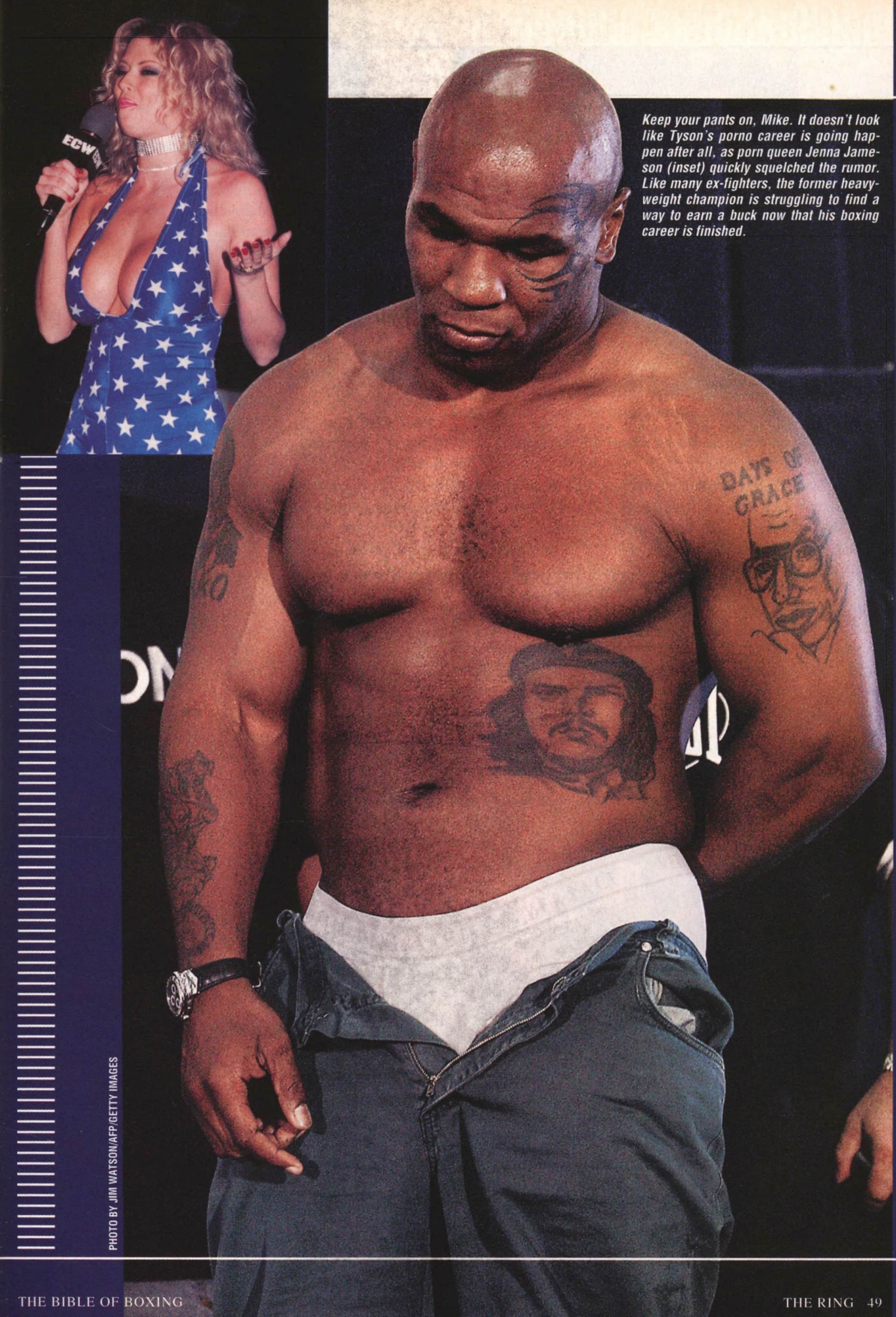
Jameson, who only makes porn with her husband, kept the rumor alive by suggesting Tyson possibly work with the other women at Jameson's studio. "So far, no deal has been reached," Jameson said on her Web site. "We are, however, continuing to talk."

Unless documentary filmmaker Ken Burns has a vintage stag reel of Jack Johnson with a harem of white hookers, Tyson would be breaking new ground. Of course, had the adult film industry been lucrative in 1915, Johnson might have beaten him to it. "Papa Jack" was not only partial to wearing pink tights and calling male reporters "sweetie," he also enjoyed wrapping his private parts in gauze to create a threatening bulge in his crotch. But porno films weren't an option for Johnson. When his fighting days were over, Johnson tried many occupations, including a gig with a carnival.

If the idea of Johnson sharing the bill with bearded ladies and two-headed chickens sounds odd, it was just one example of what retired fighters have done

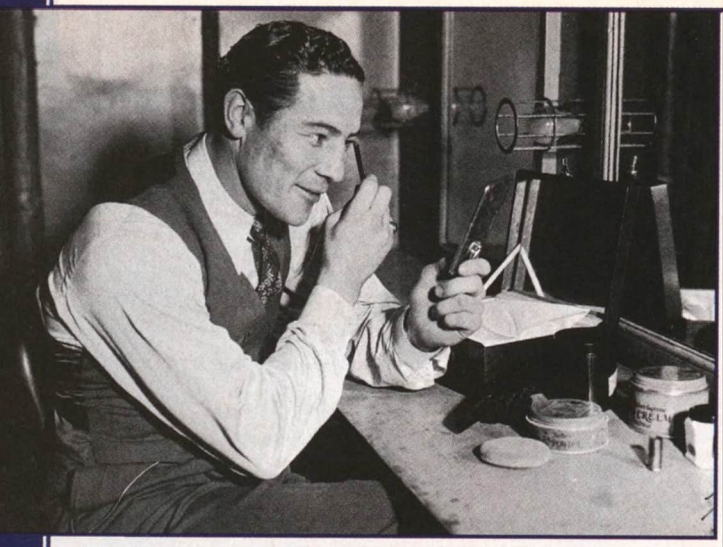


Former middleweight champion Tony Zale gave it his best shot, but failed to lift a 102-pound Johnny Coulon. The secret to the ex-bantamweight champ's trick, which was part of a stage show, was to put his finger on a pressure point of the would-be lifters neck that made it impossible for even the strongest man to get him off the ground.



Keep your pants on, Mike. It doesn't look like Tyson's porno career is going happen after all, as porn queen Jenna Jameson (inset) quickly squelched the rumor. Like many ex-fighters, the former heavyweight champion is struggling to find a way to earn a buck now that his boxing career is finished.

PHOTO BY JIM WATSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



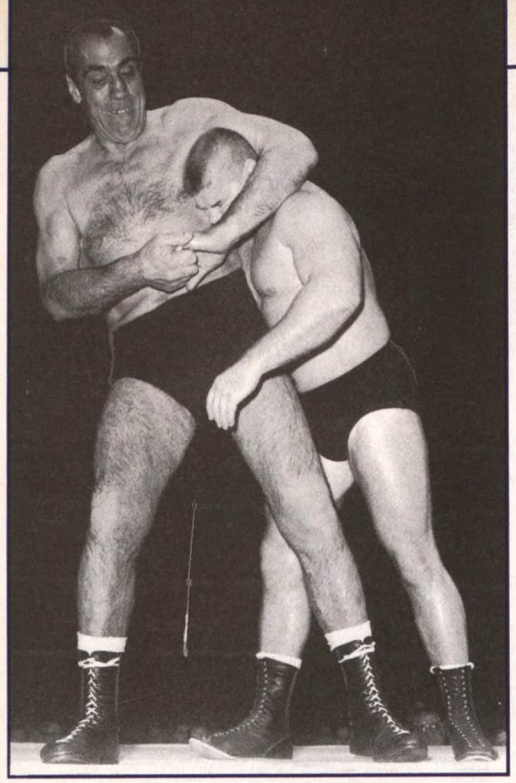
Max Baer applies makeup prior to appearing in the 1933 movie **The Prizefighter And The Lady.** *After his ring career was over, Baer also had a successful nightclub act with former light heavyweight champ Maxie Rosenbloom.*

to earn a living. Fitting into life after boxing has never been easy for retired pugs, especially the famous ones. Journeymen and clubfighters have less trouble—to them a job is a job—but fighters who have heard their names chanted in capacity-filled arenas seem baffled by retirement. They're a bit like people who have been institutionalized and find the outside world difficult and unpredictable. That's probably why so many fighters make comebacks—the sheltered regimen of boxing is preferable to the shifting minefields of everyday life. But some retired fighters have found interesting ways to survive.

Since the beginning of the gloved era, numerous ex-champs have supported themselves by making personal appearances. Jack McAuliffe spent many years on the lecture circuit. John L. Sullivan was also a popular speaker, known for his temperance talks. When Jim Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons retired from boxing, they toured the country in theatrical productions. Old-time bantamweight champ Johnny Coulon also had a stage show, but unlike Gentleman Jim and Fitz, he didn't do much talking.

Coulon's routine was simple: He'd stand on a stage and challenge anyone in the audience to lift him off the floor. Despite the frailness of his 102-pound frame, not even the most powerful weightlifters could budge him. Of his talent to prevent people from lifting him, Coulon only said, "I don't know what I did. The doctors didn't know. But the stronger the fellow was, the better I did." Coulon's act took him to Europe, where the King and Queen of Belgium failed to lift him. When his vaudeville days were over,

Even before the end of his second boxing career, George Foreman was the undisputed champion of boxing pitchmen. Big George has also enjoyed a post-boxing career as a television broadcaster. He also starred in a short-lived sitcom and wrote an autobiography.



Primo Carnera puts Reggie "The Crusher" Lisowski in a headlock during a 1961 wrestling match. "Da Preem" was taken advantage of by mobsters during his boxing career, but did okay for himself as a wrestler after he stopped boxing.

Coulon returned to boxing and trained fighters in the Chicago area.

The tradition of fighters taking to the stage was still strong in 1947, when Maxie Rosenbloom and Max Baer turned their punchy humor into a successful comedy act that eventually landed them on Broadway. The wacky duo later signed a contract with Columbia Pictures to star in a series of low-brow comedies helmed by the same production team behind The Three Stooges. The two Maxies weren't as successful on screen as they'd been on stage, and by 1952 their run as a comedy team was up. Rosenbloom, who also owned a Hollywood nightclub, became one of that town's most reliable character actors, appearing in over 60 films, including *I Married A Monster From Outer Space*, and Jerry Lewis' classic, *The Bellboy*. Baer did some more film work, worked in radio, and occasionally refereed fights. If it sounded fun, Baer was available.

Baer's strangest acting job came when he appeared as Buddy Brannen in *The Harder They Fall*, a movie loosely based on the sad career of Primo Carnera. Baer had defeated Carnera in real life, so when it came time to cast a character based on Baer, the studio thought Max was perfect to play himself. Putting his sense of humor aside, Baer portrayed "himself" as a rather nasty character.

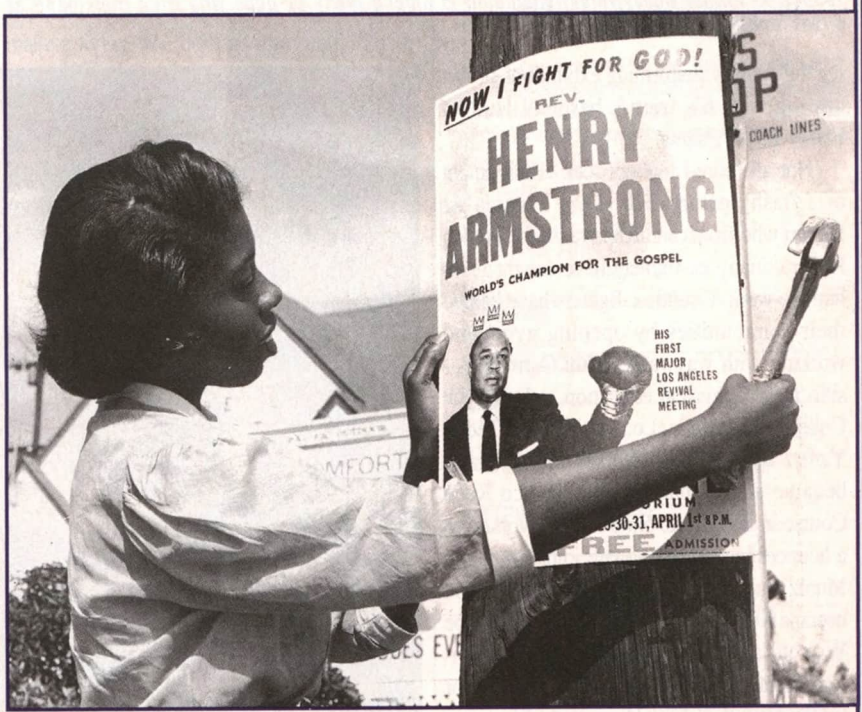
Meanwhile, Carnera left boxing for a successful career in professional wrestling. Carnera is usually remembered as a man broken by gangsters, but what is forgotten is that Primo had the last laugh, making a good living as a wrestler. Primo also had bit parts in movies, including a funny turn in *Mighty Joe Young* when he sparred with a giant ape.

Of the hundreds of retired fighters who have tried acting, Rocky Graziano was one of the first to crack the TV game open. He was a regular on the Martha Raye TV series, and parlayed his distinctive New York accent into steady work as a television pitchman long before George Foreman ever saw a grill. If Graziano were around now, we'd probably be cooking our dinners on Graziano Grills.

Foreman picked up where Graziano left off and made a fortune doing TV spots. Big George has hawked everything, including mufflers, Doritos, grills, and even a line of clothing. But before he became an endorsing machine, Foreman honed his verbal talents by preaching. George wasn't the first ex-champ to become a Bible-thumper. Three-division king Henry Armstrong was an ordained minister and bare-knuckle hero William "Bendigo" Thompson was a fire and brimstone evangelist. According to legend, Bendigo was often drunk during his sermons; his flock gathered mostly for the entertainment value.

Foreman's gift of gab also landed him a long-term job as a ringside commentator for HBO. Sugar Ray Leonard, Bobby Czyz, Barry McGuigan, Frank Bruno, and others have also taken up broadcasting. Fighters aren't always perfect commentators, but it's fun when they show their frustration, as when Ray Mancini used to scream, "You can't win fights if you don't throw punches!"

Nightlife has always appealed to fighters, so it's no surprise that many ex-champs have used their famous names to open pubs, nightclubs, and restaurants. Whether it was Ken Overlin running a dive bar in San Francisco or Jack Dempsey greeting people at his landmark New York eatery, these fighters not only made a buck, but also were able to mingle with the public. Lew Tendler owned a prosperous restaurant in Philadelphia. Jackie Fields owned a piece of The Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Johnny Wilson owned several nightclubs, including The Silver Slipper in New York and The Swanee Grill in Boston. Another Boston pub-owner, Jack Sharkey, went on to be an expert fly fisherman, tour-



A volunteer nails a poster to a utility pole advertising a revival meeting featuring the Rev. Henry Armstrong. The former triple champ was not the first or the last pugilist to turn preacher when his fighting days were over.

Jack Dempsey gives chef Gus Halitz a few salad-making tips after opening his restaurant in 1936. The former heavyweight champion is among many ex-pugs who tried their hand at either running a bar or eatery.

ing the country performing exhibitions of fly-casting with his friend, baseball Hall of Famer Ted Williams.

Not all retired fighters seek employment of a flashy nature. For every Panama Al Brown who fronts an orchestra on the French Riviera, many ex-fighters have sought more humble work. Countless fighters have helped their communities by opening gyms and working with wayward youth. Carmen Basilio taught physical education at LaMoyne College in Syracuse. Lou Ambers and Teddy Yarosz became metal workers. Harry Jeffra became stable manager of Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore. Nino Valdez worked as a bouncer in a Times Square joint. Armando Muniz taught high school math. Dick Hyland became a firefighter. Marvin Hart, Jersey Joe Walcott, and Bob Foster went into law enforcement. Ben Jeby worked as an inspector for the New York City Housing Authority.

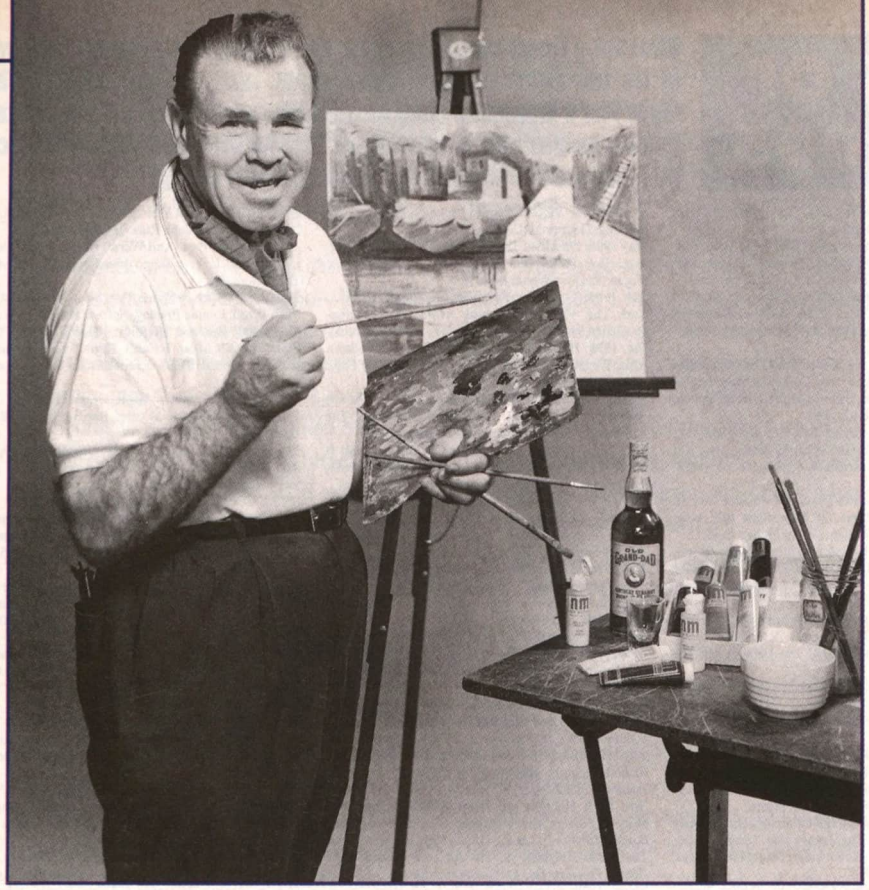
Some ex-fighters have gone the white-collar route. Tommy Laughran became a Wall Street broker. Charlie Rosenberg and Joey Giardello sold insurance. Jimmy McLarnin oversaw a prosperous tool-and-dye business.

Others took up unlikely careers. Lew Jenkins, one of the ring's real wildmen, became a lifer in the Army. Henry Hank was a zookeeper. Bushy Graham ran a poultry business. British lightweight champ Dave Charnley operated a swanky London beauty parlor. Jimmy Carruthers owned a fruit-juice bar. Mushy Callahan choreographed fight scenes for movies. Ace Hudkins bought a ranch in North Hollywood and raised horses to be used in westerns. Ralph Dupas became a blackjack dealer in Las Vegas. John Stracey embarked on a singing career. Max Schmeling became a soft-drink tycoon, and one of his opponents, Mickey Walker, became a critically acclaimed artist, with many of his paintings exhibited throughout Europe.

But fighters who find satisfying careers after boxing are lucky.

In 1933, a nearly destitute Paul Berlenbach placed an ad in *The New York World Telegram* that read, "Ex-light heavyweight champion wishes position as athletic instructor with private family. Will also act as chauffeur." Berlenbach eventually found work in a brewery, but like many ex-champs, he struggled in retirement. Willie Pep tried several lines of work, from manag-

Jimmy McLarin checks production at the Dyer Plating Company in Paramount, California, where he worked as a successful executive following his Hall of Fame boxing career.



Former welterweight and middleweight king Mickey Walker became a successful artist in his later years. Note the bottle of bourbon on the table for inspirational purposes.

ing fighters to selling cars. He even worked as a tax marshal in Connecticut, but was so softhearted he rarely collected on any debts. And there are the well-known tales of Beau Jack shining shoes at The Fountainebleau Hotel in Miami, and Joe Louis shambling around Caesars Palace as a greeter.

Former light heavyweight champ Billy Conn once described the problems faced by an ex-fighter searching for a new occupation.

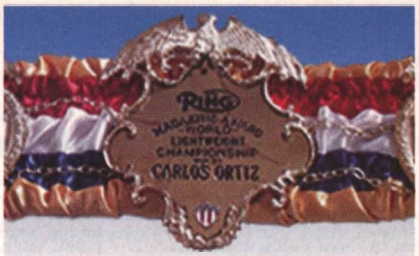
"It's like taking a racehorse and hitching his ass to a garbage wagon," Conn said. "You'll break his heart. He's gonna pull that wagon after he was a racehorse? He can't do it. That's why all the fellows who were prizefighters, they're all busted. What the hell can they do?" Conn, a successful businessman with several real estate holdings, was especially harsh on fighters who went into showbiz.

"If you want to be some goddamn clown, go get in the circus. All of that singing and dancing, it takes the dignity out of a great business, professional prizefighting."

Conn would certainly disapprove of a fighter going into the adult film industry, but the worlds of boxing and porn do have some similarities. Both businesses exude a kind of cheap glamour, and are known to attract criminal types. Drug use is common in both businesses. Certain promoters are probably no less sleazy than the producers of *Snatch Masters*. There are also similarities between porno stars and fighters. Both rely on their bodies to make a living, and both perform until they're too old to deliver the goods. And while porn actors may not risk brain damage, quite a few die from AIDS. Granted, the adult film industry polices itself better now than during the days of Linda Lovelace, but there are still slimeballs in the business that would see Tyson as a perfect patsy to be manipulated. If Tyson wants be like Sonny Liston and come to a mysterious end, the seamy world of hardcore porn could be just the place for him.

There's also the issue of endurance. Tyson hasn't been more than a three-round fighter for years. A porno director would need more than nine minutes from Iron Mike, if you get our meaning. But who knows? If the Viagra people are looking for a washed-up fighter who is also an ex-con/porno star to be a spokesman, Tyson could land his first endorsement deal in 15 years. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine.



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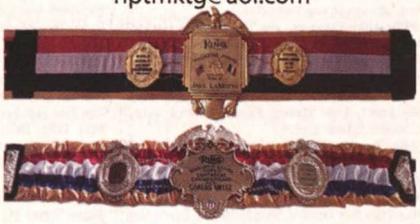

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New Face

(Continued from page 20)

garner a slice of the crossover appeal De La Hoya enjoys.

But in the meantime, he battles the anxiety of wanting everything too fast—like gulping down his first meal in two days.

"I do want something better," said Mares, who is bilingual and renews his visa every six months to remain in the United States. "I remember my past. I'll never forget what I went through, and when I started getting bigheaded in the Olympics, I just thought back to my past. It made me realize what I came from and who I am. I'll remember those times forever."

Originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, Mares moved to the U.S. with his mother, Velen, and his six brothers and sisters when he was seven. The Mares family has since blossomed into 11 children in all, the youngest two-year-old twins.

When the Mares lived in Guadalajara, they had a good life. Patriarch Ismael made a living as a salesman. Money was consistent, as Ismael supported his family selling gold, clothes, and watches. He owned three stands in busy sections of Guadalajara. Then one night it all changed. Young Abner was awoken by his mother and told that the family was moving—without his father.

Velen entered the U.S. with her seven children, with no money and no job prospects. To Abner, he wasn't just coming into a different country; he was entering a new world, where he couldn't understand the language and endured the icy glares of prejudice as foreigners.

"We finally settled in this small apartment, all eight of us, but we had some support because I had an uncle living downstairs and an aunt living upstairs from us," Mares said. "I slept on the floor, but it was carpeted and I got to watch TV all night, since we slept in the big room."

But when the refrigerator was empty, Mares and his siblings snuck out in the wee hours of the morning once or twice a week, searching for something to eat. They found a mini-paradise in the back of a local Wal-Mart.

Street people from everywhere gathered there in the morning to weed through scraps of outdated food.

"My mother didn't know, we couldn't let her know," Mares recalled. "I don't like talking about the past that much; my mom doesn't know about some things, and it was tough for her to hear some of the things that did happen. That's why I love my mother so much.

"I used to go to sleep with my stomach hurting because I hadn't eaten anything that day. The ice cream was the best. I didn't care where it came from. It tasted good to me. I don't know how long we kept doing it, but I know we stopped when my older brother got real sick from drinking sour milk. That was it. We never went back again. But I think it hurt my mother when she found out."

A year later, Ismael rejoined his family in the U. S. and the Mares gained stability. Abner, in the meantime, gained a new hobby, boxing. Watching his oldest brother, Ismael Jr., accrue boxing trophies, Abner felt compelled to get some fancy hardware himself. He had been in his share of street scraps, so he wasn't afraid.

"I wanted to do what he was doing," Abner said. "I first got in the ring when I was 12. I would go two, three days a week, and the rest of the time go and hang out in the streets. I didn't take boxing seriously when I was young."

But people would love watching the little guy spar. One person drawn to young Abner during this time was Mike Vital, a former city worker who ran a gym in Norwalk, California, where Abner used to train. Vital and Mares soon built a close bond, almost like father and son, which they maintain today.

By age 13, Mares was winning national amateur tournaments, but he was also out in the streets of Hawaiian Gardens, where gang thugs have no hesitation about shooting police officers. Ismael Sr. saw the potential of his son and quickly made a life choice that at the time Abner resented but eventually came around to understand. When Abner turned 15, Ismael Sr. shipped Abner back to Mexico to work with the Mexican Olympic boxing team. And since Mares was not a U. S. citizen, the only way he could reach the Olympics would be to compete for his native Mexico. He beat two elite Mexican amateurs and quickly made the team. Soon, Mares would take off halfway around the world.

"I didn't know what was happening. I thought my father was punishing me, sending me to a place where I didn't know anyone and where I was the new guy that everyone picked on," Mares said. "I traveled to the World Tournament in Hungary, and I had no idea what they were talking about. I just thought it was another tournament. I mean I just made the team, and in two weeks I'd be traveling across the world. I was ready for it."

He won the tournament's 119-pound, 15-and-under division and was honored as best boxer of the tournament.

"I didn't know how big it was, everyone was making such a big deal out about me winning," Mares remembered. "I started to think I must have done something special."

And then something happened—Mares stopped training. "I just felt I was too good to train, that I could just step in the ring and beat anyone," he said. "Before the Olympics, I just felt I could go in the ring and win."

He thought wrong. Mares was ousted in the first round in Athens, Greece, but his ability still attracted the eye of De La Hoya, who had seen Mares at an amateur tournament in Puerto Rico. In January 2005, Golden Boy Promotions signed Mares, with Vital as his manager. Floyd Mayweather Sr. has been training Mares since his fourth fight.

"I like the kid a lot," Mayweather said. "Out of all the young fighters I have, I think he's the best. Abner is good enough to one day be as good as my son. He's something special. I don't know how many times you see a Mexican throw three left hooks."

What Mares has demonstrated is power in both hands and that he is a very good finisher. On the Jermain Taylor-Bernard Hopkins undercard in mid-July at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, Mares did away with Elvis Martinez in three rounds.

"Golden Boy knows they have a good prospect here," Vital said. "We have to be careful with Abner that we don't move him too fast, because he wants to make money for his family. Sometimes he gets a little up on his horse about it."

As for Mares, he closely guards his past, and even laughs a little about it now.

"My whole family comes to my fights now, and they loved the MGM Grand," Mares said. "It was funny because we have a van and we put everyone in it. My parents thought the MGM would say something because we're so many and they thought it was a small hotel. They didn't know how big the place was."

With room service that delivered ice cream. ■

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Hasim Rahman W 12 Monte Barrett
Oliver McCall KO 4 Przemyslaw Saleta
Audley Harrison KO 4 Robert Wiggins
Tony Tubbs KO 7 Jason Waller
Chauncy Welliver W 12 Chris Lewallen
Brandon Cabell KO 3 Ronald Bellamy

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Eduardo Gutierrez KO 3 Gustavo Enriquez
Johnathon Banks KO 1 Roosevelt Johnson
Ola Afolabi W 8 Michael Simms

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Yusef Mack W 10 Thomas Reid
Henry Saenz KO 8 Walter Palacios
Ijeoma Egbunine KO 7 Alexandra Maloy

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jeff Lacy KO 7 Robin Reid
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Daniel Dawson W 10 Josh Clenshaw
Miguel Angel Arroyo W 8
Gabriel Gustavo Heck

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Junior middleweight Joel Julio lands a right into Henry

Lajuan Simon KO 7 Manu Ntoh
Andre Dirrell KO 2 Juan Camacho

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Chad Dawson KO 3 Ronald Boddie
Keiji Eguchi W 10 Naotaka Hozumi
Robert Frazier W 8 Virgil McClendon
Jose Hilton Dos Santos KO 8
Marival Sobral Sobrinho
Marco Antonio Rubio KO 4
Leon Pearson
Julio Cesar Garcia KO 2 David Montes
Ruben Padilla KO 3 Trenice Brown
Adam Vella KO 1 Bruce Glozier
Andre Ward KO 3 Christopher Holt

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Fernando Vargas W 10 Javier Castillejo
Alejandro Garcia W 12 Luca Messi
Ricardo Mayorga W 12 Michele Piccirillo
Sebastian Lujan KO 5 Marcelo Rodriguez
Robert Kamya W 12 Alex Bunema
Tobia Giuseppe Loriga W
12 Victor Kpadenue
Marcin Piatkowski W 10 Sasha Shnip
Ricardo Torres KO 3 Edwin Vazquez
Juan Carlos Ramirez KO 8 Mario Ramirez
Wilmer Gonzalez KO 7 Luis Carballo
Agnaldo Nunes KO 3 Ivan Alvarez
Joel Julio KO 4 Christopher Henry
Yoshinori Takenaka KO 2
Watt Wor Wutthinant

WELTERWEIGHTS

Luis Collazo KO 8 Miguel Angel Gonzalez
Rudy Lovato KO 12 Donnie Fosmire
Americo Santos KO 1 Ike Ezeji
Chad Bennett KO 1 Kiatchai 13 Riantower
Antonio Diaz KO 5 Roberto Carlos Ortega
Tsuyoshi Kamiishi KO 2 Mike Porchaiwat
Danji Suruga KO 2 Tsuyoshi Oyama
Yoshinori Takenaka KO 2 Wat Por Putinan
Hiroshi Yamaguchi KO 4
Singtothorng Flightgym
Roberto Hernan Reuque KO 1
Angel German Ilundain
Charlie Jose Navarro KO 1 Jose Luis Prieto

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Featherweight Humberto Soto smashes Juarez with a right

Humberto Lopez KO 4 Joel Juarez
Motoki Sasaki KO 1 Mitsuyuki Komori

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Julio Diaz KO 1 Russell Jones
Seishu Iida W 10 Ranger Iizuka
Miguel Roman W 10 Francisco Mateos
Nick Casal W 8 Jose Roman
Ricardo Dominguez W 8 Rafael Ortiz
Pablo Ernesto Olivetto Tech. Win 7
Mario Marcelino Alegre
Juan Carlos Alderete KO 1
Hugo Orlando Fernandez
Francisco Figueroa KO 6
Hector Alejandro Jr.
Motoki Sasaki KO 1 Mitsuyuki Komori
Nasser Athumani W 12
Mathews Chifumbeni

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Juan Lazcano KO 1 Marco Angel Perez
Aldo Nazareno Rios W 12
Roberto David Arrieta
Manuel Leyva W 10 Martin Fing
Javier Castro W 10 Cesar Soto
Oscar Maximiliano James KO 8 Luis Mena
Vicente Escobedo KO 2 Juan Manuel Matias
Rodrigo Juarez KO 5 Abel Sepulveda
Oscar Maximiliano James KO 8 Luis Mena
Michael Clark KO 1 John Scalzi
Michael Katsidis KO 5 Ranee Ganoy
Matt Zegan KO 7 Jesus Perez
Octavio Lara KO 1 Miguel Alvarez
Hiroyasu Matsuzaki KO 4 Takanori Mikami
David Santos W 8 Armando Cordoba
Oscar Olivas W 8 Marcelino Lechuga
Víctor Hugo Paz W 8
Justo Evangelista Martinez
Moisés Gutiérrez W 8 Carlos Narvaez
Milton Lara D 8 Stanley Méndez
Mia St John W 10 Donna Biggers

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Jorge Barrios KO 2 Victor Santiago
Antonio Davis W 12 Frankie Zepeda
Verquan Kimbrough W 10 Marty Robbins
Cornelius Lock W 10 Phillip Payne
Billy Dib KO 2 Michael Kizza
Yusuke Kobori KO 4 Tetsuya Suzuki
Angel Alirio Rivero KO 3 Guadalupe Arce
Monty Clay KO 6 Juan Polo Perez
Edwin Valero KO 1 Jose Hernandez
Tomas Zambrano KO 5 Guadalupe Arce
Victor Dominguez KO 5 Victor Salazar
Lina Ramirez KO 3 Elizabeth Ruiz

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Chris John KO 10 Tommy Browne
Humberto Soto W 12 Ricardo Juarez
Roinet Caballero W 12 Santos Martínez
Toshimitsu Sakai KO 3 Jojo Arnado
Fernando Omar Lizarraga KO 1 Saul Lopez
Berman Sánchez KO 2 Reynaldo Mendieta
Jorge Linares KO 5 Jesus Perez
Ahmed Elomar KO 2 Denchai Sor Tiebkoon
Masaki Sawanaga W 10
Yoshimasa Mochizuki
Antonio Escalante KO 2 Terrence Roy

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Joksan Hernandez W 10
Robinson Castellanos
Giovanni Andrade KO 3
Edcarlos Soares Macedo
Jose Saez KO 2 Victor Godoi

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Leo Gamez KO 6 Dioberto Julio
Daigo Nakahiro W 10 Hiroyasu Hasebe
Kuniyuki Aizawa KO 3 Sherwin Manatad
Luis Maldonado KO 4 Julio Grimaldo
Carlos Valcarcel W 6 Francisco Soto
Gun Tinular KO 7 Armindo De Araujo

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Simon Ramoni W 12 Theo Modise
Yuki Kobayashi KO 9 Yadpetch Borkorsor
Alexander Munoz KO 1 Adolfo Ramos
Anselmo Moreno W 10 Ricardo Molina
Masayuki Arinaga KO 9 Daisuke Maruyama
Yuki Murai W 8 Tsunejiro Sato
Katsunori Ito W 8 Masatsugu Okada

FLYWEIGHTS

Vic Darchinyan KO 5 Jair Jiminez
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Gilberto Keb Baas W 10 Manuel Ruiz
La Paene Masara W 10 Wendell Cajoles
Koki Kameda KO 3
Wanmee Chok Singwangcha
Ken Nakajima W 10 Francisco Rosas

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Roberto Vasquez KO 4 Jose Antonio Aguirre
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Takahisa Masuda W 12 Shingo Yamaguchi
Irfan Ogah KO 3 Phalangchai Sor Voraphin
Hugo Cazares KO 8 Alex Sanchez
Javier Tello W 10 Edwin Díaz
Akira Yaegashi KO 2 Danchai Sithsaithong
Naoto Saito D 8 Kenichi Onishi

STRAWWEIGHTS

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Katsunari Takayama

BOXING EQUIPMENT
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BRONX, NEW YORK

PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

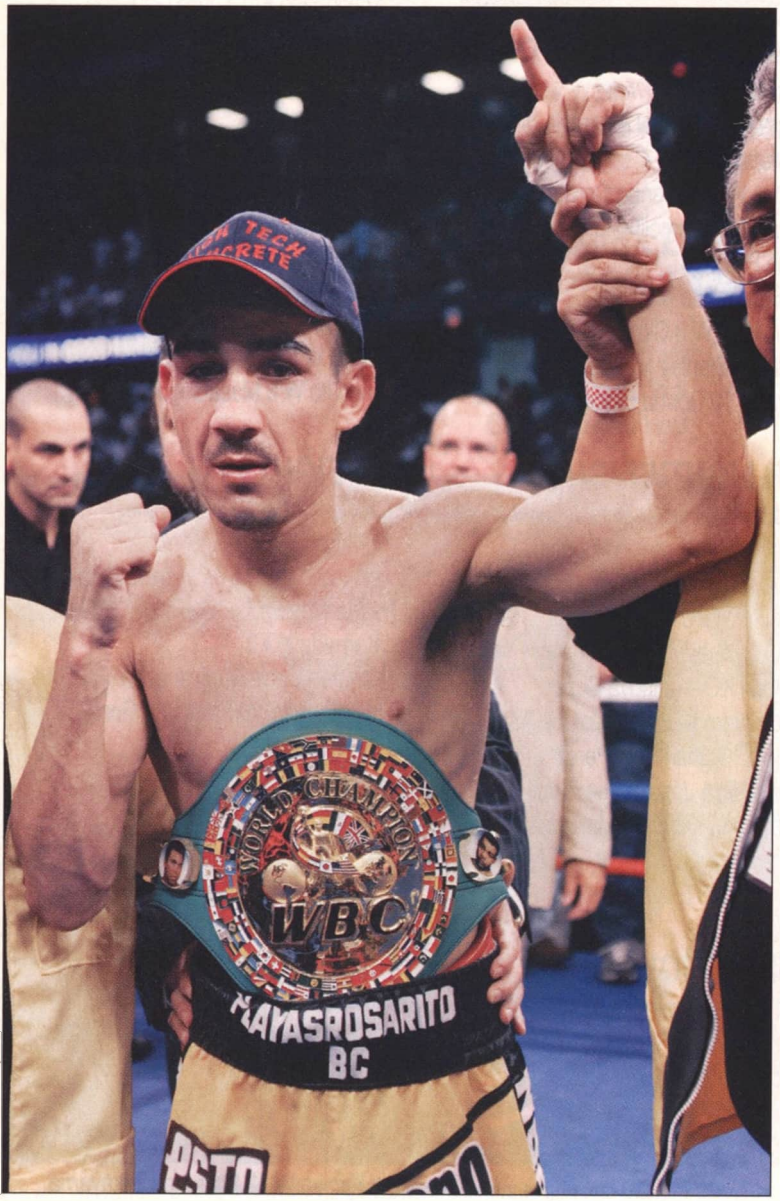


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Rocky Juarez thought the bad news was that Injin Chi had pulled out of their August 20 fight. As it turns out, the real bad news came in the form of who pulled *in* to the fight.

Humberto Soto had a nifty little three-year unbeaten streak going, but the last loss before the streak began was a decision to used up Kevin Kelley, suggesting that Juarez didn't have much to worry about with the two-weeks-notice sub. On paper, the little-known Mexican was the perfect replacement opponent—not too threatening, but respectable enough for the bout to remain on HBO. Juarez might catch him early, as he often does, or he might have to work hard over the distance. But either way, this was to be nothing more than a tune-up for the to-be-rescheduled Chi fight.

By about the end of the second round, however, it was clear that this was no tune-up, as Soto had just the right style—and the right amount of burning desire—to give Juarez problems. Not even a pair of point deductions could slow Soto down, as he eked out a one-point unanimous decision win to vault to the upper echelon of the featherweight ratings.

Juarez fought well, but he just had the misfortune of running into the Fighter of the Month—and the Late Sub of the Year.

• • • •

Humberto Soto

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Ricardo Mayorga W 12 Michele Piccirillo

Chicago, Illinois: The outcome was almost as predictable as the temporary nature of the retirement that Mayorga announced 10 months earlier. In his first fight since losing to Felix Trinidad by eighth-round knockout and claiming to be done with professional boxing, the 32-year-old Mayorga, 154, Managua, Nicaragua, threw everything that he could muster at 35-year-old Piccirillo, 154, Bari, Italy, to score a unanimous decision victory and claim the vacant WBC super welterweight title at the United Center.

Mayorga knocked Piccirillo down twice in the second round and once in the fourth, but couldn't quite finish him off. Piccirillo settled down as the rounds went on, but could not mount an attack, as Mayorga dictated the tempo with his street brawling style over the course of the fight. Piccirillo spent most of the night on the defensive.

"I am the best puncher in the world, and Piccirillo fought scared all night long," said former welterweight champion Mayorga, 28-5-1 (23) with 1 no-contest.

"Two of the three knockdowns came from blows behind my head that diminished me," Piccirillo, 44-3 (28) with 1 no-contest, argued. "He is a dirty fighter. They should have taken points away from him for the way he fought."

Referee Gerald Scott (USA) would have had to take away a lot of points to make this one close. Judge John McCarthy (USA) scored the fight 117-110, Oren Schellenberger (USA) had it 120-105, and Anek Hongtongkam (Thailand) saw it 117-108, all in favor of Mayorga.

"Before I make a decision for my next opponent, I need to drink some water and have a cigarette, but I want [Fernando] Vargas next," Mayorga stated. "I want to be back in the ring in November."

Television: Showtime Pay-Per-View

Promoter: Don King Productions

(8-13-05)

Joseph Hoff

Luis Collazo KO 7 Miguel Angel Gonzalez

Chicago, Illinois: In his first defense of the devalued, non-"super" version of the WBA welterweight title, 24-year-old Collazo, 147, Brooklyn, New York, dominated former lightweight titleholder Gonzalez, 1461/2, Mexico City, Mexico, a 34-year-old veteran whose abilities have long since faded. Collazo, who beat Jose

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Mayorga (left) ends layoff with decision over Piccirillo

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Collazo rocks Gonzalez with a right en route to TKO victory

Antonio Rivera by a close unanimous decision to claim the belt in April, staggered Gonzalez with shots to the head throughout the night. He was unyielding and proved much too active and quick for Gonzalez, who struggled to find an edge as he relied almost exclusively on shots to Collazo's body.

"It was a great fight and I gained a lot of experience fighting someone with Miguel's experience," Collazo, 26-1 (12), said.

After seven one-sided rounds, Gonzalez' corner wisely threw in the towel at the beginning of the eighth to end this bout at the United Center.

"My corner and I decided to stop the fight," Gonzalez, 49-5-1 (39), explained. "Collazo had figured out my style and the last rounds would have been the same way." Gonzalez said later that he was contemplating retirement.

Through seven rounds, judges Mike Glienna (USA) and Phil Siegel (USA) both scored the fight 68-65, while John Poturaj (USA) scored the bout 69-65, all in favor of Collazo. The referee was John O'Brien (USA).

"I'll take anyone next," Collazo announced. "[Arturo] Gatti said he's coming up and [Floyd] Mayweather too. I'll fight anyone who wants to come try to take my belt."

Television: Showtime Pay-Per-View

Promoter: Don King Productions

(8-13-05)

Joseph Hoff

Eagle Kyowa W 12 Katsunari Takayama

Tokyo, Japan: Last December, Japan-based Thailander Eagle surprisingly lost the WBC 105-pound belt to Isaac Bustos via fourth-round TKO because of a fractured right shoulder, and in April, Japanese youngster Takayama impressively captured the title by a unanimous nod over Bustos. Now Eagle, who was dominating Bustos prior to suffering the injury, has reclaimed what would have been his all along if not for some bad luck. Eagle, 1043/4, regained the belt by pounding out a unanimous decision over Takayama, 105, over 12 heats.

Eagle, 26, made a good start by overpowering and outspeeding Takayama—a reputed speedster himself—to win the first two rounds with ease. The 22-year-old titlist came back and displayed his trademark hit-and-run tactics to take the third. Eagle, however, showed his advantage in physical power in overwhelming Takayama as the contest progressed. Takayama threw many ineffective, light combinations, while Eagle caught the Japanese beltholder with more effective shots to the face and midsection. Kyowa cleverly shifted his target to Takayama's belly midway through the contest, which paid off well as the defending titlist visibly slowed down and became even less powerful.

Takayama, 15-2 (7), sustained a slight gash in the 11th, but showed heart in hotly exchanging incessant combinations with Eagle, 14-1 (5), toe-to-toe in the center of the ring in the last round. Ringsiders called the final session a strong candidate for Round of the Year, and two judges gave it to Takayama, while another official tallied 10-10. But it made no difference in the ultimate outcome, as Takeaki Kanaya (Japan) scored the fight 116-112, Franz Marti (Thailand) had it 117-113, and Brian McMahon (Australia) saw it a surprisingly wide 119-111, all for the muscular Eagle. The referee was Yuji Fukuchi (Japan).

Promoter: Green Tsuda Promotions, in association with Kadoebi Jewel Promotions

(8-6-05)

Joe Koizumi

Humberto Soto W 12 Rocky Juarez

Rosemont, Illinois: Juarez had been groomed for stardom since winning the silver medal for the U.S. at the 2000 Olympic games in Sydney, facing carefully selected opponents that allowed him to develop, undefeated, at just the right pace. Soto had toiled in relative obscurity, facing whomever, whenever, and picking up five losses along the way as he learned his craft. But once the bell rang for their match on the Fernando Vargas-Javier Castillejo undercard at the

Allstate Arena, all that mattered was who could fight better, and on this night, it was the heavy underdog, and late sub for injured WBC titlist Injin Chi, Soto.

The 25-year-old Soto, 126, Los Mochis, Mexico, appeared stronger for most of the first half of the action-packed bout, using his height and greater activity to establish an advantage, but the rounds were hard won. Juarez, also 25, though certainly trailing at the midway point, was landing his share of leather. The problem for him was that Soto was easily walking through shots that had felled other featherweights. By the seventh round, the fight's momentum began to shift in favor of Juarez, 126, Houston, Texas, especially after he connected with a quick left jab and followed up with a right cross midway through the round.

The comeback persisted through the eighth round, and was aided when referee Tim Adams (USA) deducted two points from Soto, one in the ninth round and one in the 10th, for punching in back of the head. Thanks to the two deductions, Soto's lead on the scorecards had disappeared heading into the final round, but he won that stanza clearly to claim the upset victory. Judge Tommy Kaczmarek (USA) scored the bout 114-112, while John McCarthy (USA) and Ken Morita (Japan) each scored the fight 114-113.

"I fought a tough opponent," Juarez, 23-1 (16), conceded afterward. "He was a better fighter today. He beat me. I think I showed a lot of heart."

Filled with joy after the fight, Soto, 37-5-2 (21) with 1 no-contest, had only warm words for his tenacious opponent.

"I want to congratulate Rocky Juarez," he said through a translator. "He is a great fighter. Rocky Juarez is a great warrior like any Mexican."

As a result of the victory, Soto earned the shot at Chi that was supposed to have gone to Juarez.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Main Events in association with Guilty Boxing
(8-20-05)
Joseph Hoff

Chris John KO 9 Tommy Browne

Sydney, Australia: John may merely hold a diminished version of an alphabet title, but he's gradually earning respect as a legitimately championship-caliber fighter. On the heels of a dominant win over Derrick Gainer in his previous bout, the Indonesian dominated and stopped Aussie Browne, who had gone the distance in a loss to Injin Chi in January. If Chi is regarded as one of the featherweight division's best, then it seems WBA non-"super" beltholder John should probably be regarded on a similar level now.

The crowd at Penrith Panthers was encouraged by the fine performance of Browne, 1251/4, in round one, but the local favorite didn't have any success after that. John, 1243/4, slipped the tall challenger's jab and unleashed vicious combinations for the next eight rounds. The 25-year-old titlist was quick, elusive, and brilliant with his counterpunching, dishing out a violent one-sided beating. At the end of the ninth round, referee Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) recommended that the fight be stopped, and the 22-year-old Browne's corner agreed. John was ahead by seven points on two judges' cards and by five points on the third.

"I had a lot of trouble making weight," noted Browne, 18-4-1 (7), "but Chris John is great … I knew he had hand speed, but he surprised me. He was a slick fighter."

"He is good, my God," said ref Christodoulou of John, 36-0-1 (20). "I've refereed all the featherweights in the world, and he can beat any one of them, believe me."

(8-7-05) ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Soto (right) upsets Juarez in action-pack punchout

The RING FLASHBACK

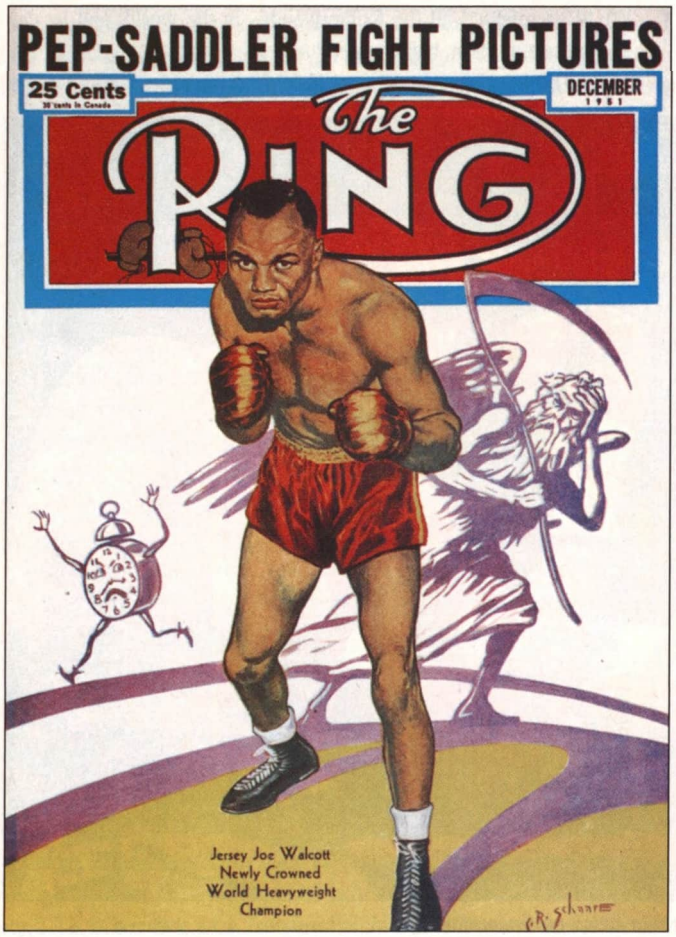
Through The Years With "The Bible Of Boxing"

DECEMBER 1951

COVER STORY: "Walcott Appearances No Ticket To Fort Knox" Jersey Joe didn't get a cover when he stopped Ezzard Charles to win the heavyweight title in July, and by the time the December issue rolled off the press, critics were already beginning to question the way the new champ was handling his reign. According to writer Dan Daniel, Walcott had "placed the heavyweight championship in deep freeze."

Originally, there was supposed to be rematch within 60 days of Walcott's seventh-round kayo victory. However, "Charles and his Brian Trust were not eager to get that chance within two months." That was fine with Walcott, who "felt that he was entitled to a year of easy pickings."

When no easy fights materialized, Walcott made a series of personal appearances that garnered little in the way of revenue. As Daniel explained: "Once a fighter recedes into the background, and relies on his name and his fame to make money for him, he finds that there is no substitute for remaining in the public eye through action." Meanwhile, Charles bounced back with an impressive kayo of Rex Layne, displaying what Daniel called "a new and more interesting style."



Charles added two more wins, a decision over Joey Maxim and a kayo of Joe Kahut, to close out the year, while Walcott remained idle. Walcott finally gave Charles an opportunity to regain the title in June '52. Apparently, the inactivity didn't hurt him too much, and Jersey Joe retained the title via 15-round decision. But with Rocky Marciano rampaging through the ranks, Walcott was destined to lose the heavyweight crown in his next defense.

"Pep-Saddler Brawl Disgrace To Boxing" Editor Nat Fleischer was disgusted by the foul-filled featherweight championship bout between Sandy Saddler and Willie Pep that ended in a ninth-round TKO in Saddler's favor.

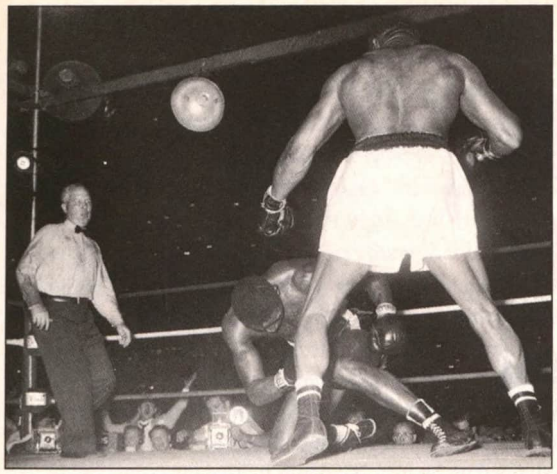
"Wrestling, heeling, eye-gouging, thumbing—in fact every dirty trick known to the old-timers in the days of bare knuckle bruisers was on display at the Polo Grounds." wrote Fleischer. "Both boxers should have been tossed out long before the ninth round ... every code of sportsmanship and decency was ignored."

Fleischer was clearly worried how the ugly brawl would affect the Sweet Science's image, and also ripped referee Ray Miller, writing, "Unfortunately, Miller, a

WORLD CHAMPIONS

(for the period ended October 17, 1951)

Heavyweight: Jersey Joe Walcott
Light Heavyweight: Joey Maxim
Middleweight: Ray Robinson
Welterweight: Kid Gavilan
Lightweight: James Carter
Featherweight: Sandy Saddler
Bantamweight: Vic Toweel
Flyweight: Dada Marino



Walcott didn't fight for almost a year after icing Charles for the heavyweight title

Referee Miller tried to break Pep and Saddler during unruly title bout

great fighter in his day, let the bout get out of hand … in England, where I have seen several hundred bouts, no referee would have condoned such brawling."

"Luckless Challengers" In a theme piece, spinning off of Billy Graham's controversial points loss to welterweight champ Kid Gavilan in August 1951, writer/illustrator Ted Carroll took a look at title challengers who fell just a bit short of winning a championship. Among those included were Izzy Jannazzo, Louis "Kid" Kaplan, Dave Shade, Allie Stolz, and Steve Belloise.

Carroll ended the article by wondering if "Graham is doomed to the fate of these illustrious others, upon whom the gods of fistic destiny refused to smile." As it turned out, he was. Graham got a final crack at the title in 1952, losing another 15-round decision to Gavilan.

"Gilt-Edged Gil" Johnny Salak profiled undefeated Philadelphia welterweight Gil Turner, who was riding a 24-bout winning streak, 21 via knockout.

"Just turned 21 years of age, with less than a year-and-a-half of real experience, he has dramatically vaulted himself into the top ranks of the welterweights," wrote Salak.

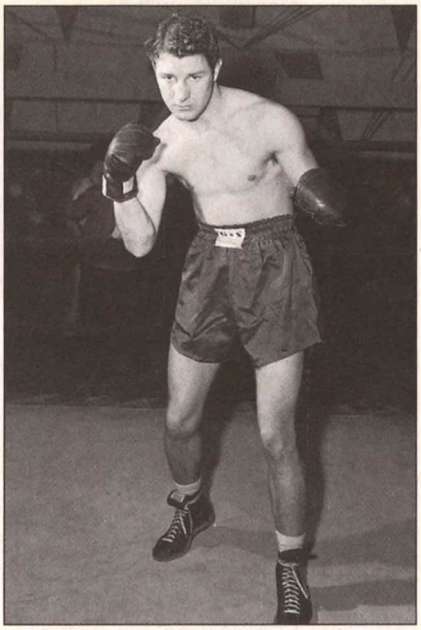
After knocking out Charley Fusari, Turner's manager, George Katz, offered 147-pound champion Gavilan a $40,000 guarantee to defend against the Philly phenom. Gavilan initially refused, but in July '52, "The Cuban Hawk" ended Turner's unbeaten run by stopping him in the 11th round.

"It Can Happen" In another theme piece, Al Buck wrote about draws in championship bouts. Among the most prominent title fight stalemates under discussion was the 1940 bout in which Ceferino Garcia ended Henry Armstrong's dream of holding four world titles simultaneously by retaining the 160-pound belt with a 10-round draw.

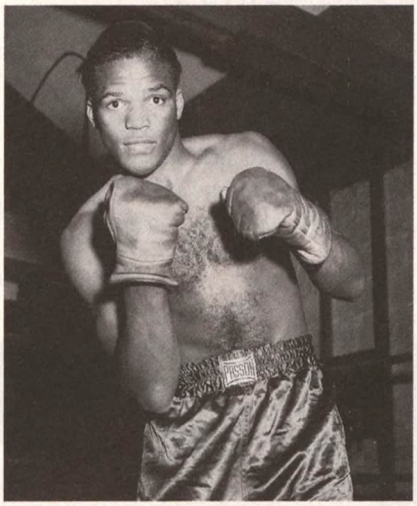
"German Boxing Diary" Local correspondent J. A. Tree covered the Berlin bout between German heavyweight titleholder Hein Ten Hoff and Britain's Jack Gardner. A record-breaking crowd of 27,000 was on hand to watch Ten Hoff take the European title in a bout that Tree described as "the dullest fight I have been unfortunate enough to witness in years."

"With Our Servicemen" In a column that focused on boxing and boxers in the armed forces, it was reported that former lightweight champion Lew Jenkins, who was serving with the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division in Korea, had received the Silver Star for gallantry in action.

"Fighter Of The Month" Ezzard Charles was honored for his 11th-round knockout of Rex Layne. "It wasn't so much the victory that earned him 'Fighter Of The Month,'" wrote Fleischer, "as it was the manner in which he went about the work of regaining the public's confidence in him after making a poor start in his comeback fight." ■



Graham: Deemed unlucky in losing bid to unseat Gavilan



Turner was on a hot streak

Charles' kayo of Layne earned him top honors for the month

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

LUCK OF THE IRISH

I read the article "Is There Hope For The Heavyweight Division?" in the October 2005 issue of THE RING EXTRA, and feel that the comments on Irishman Kevin McBride were harsh. Yes, the man was previously unknown and every time he stepped up he lost, but damn it, give him some credit. He beat Mike Tyson quicker than what Lennox Lewis did, and unlike Danny Williams, he didn't beat a one-legged Tyson.

Mind you, by McBride's own admission, the Tyson fight was the first time in his life he ever got to train full-time for a bout. I recall the 1975 bout between Muhammad Ali and clubfighter Chuck Wepner who had lost to every big name in the sport, but trained full-time for Ali and went the distance, even knocking down "The Greatest." Give McBride some credit. He beat the biggest name in boxing, regardless if Tyson is half the fighter he once was, and dominated the entire time. I wish the Irishman all the luck in the world and hope he gets to fight for a title, since I've seen him mention on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* that his team is in negotiations to face John Ruiz.

RUFUS DEFIBAUGH
Rufus_difbaugh2002@yahoo.com

HEARNS vs. FATHER TIME

As a huge Thomas Hearns fan, I feel compelled to write regarding his latest, shocking comeback. I was lucky enough to meet the great man while in Las Vegas two years ago, and back then I thought he was a content former champion, basking in his well-earned reputation as living legend. Never did it enter my mind that he would once again lace 'em up. The "Hit Man" of the late-'80s or early-'90s would, in my opinion, have destroyed men like Antonio Tarver, Glen Johnson, Clinton Woods, and Roy Jones. But if Tommy actually gets as far as fighting one of these guys later this year or early next, then the toughest opponent of all, Father Time, would provide unlimited assistance to these light heavyweights, making victory for Hearns an extreme long shot. Judging by his comments after his win over John Long, Hearns will fight again, unfortunately risking his health when his all-time greatness is already without doubt and needing no further proving.

JAMES SLATER
York, England

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kevin McBride watches Mike Tyson stage what amounted to a sit-down strike near the end of the sixth round. Reader Rufus Defibaugh thinks that McBride has not received enough credit for his TKO of the once-mighty Iron Mike and hopes that the likeable Irishman gets a crack at WBA titleholder John Ruiz.

A RIGHTEOUS READ

I just finished reading the 2005 edition of THE RING YEARBOOK, which featured boxing columns over the past 82 years, and I must say it is one of the best things you guys have ever done. For someone deeply interested in boxing journalism,

this issue offered a glimpse of the various writing styles of some of the great writers, as well as the sociopolitical climates associated with boxing over the years. I loved reading Nat Fleischer's columns. Although they seem dated now, his passion for the sport bleeds out onto the pages—and you have to love a guy who uses words like "knavery," "chicanery," and "the height of folly."

My favorite column was "Dreams And Hope" by Richard Hoffer. For me, it encapsulates everything that is intriguing about the Sweet Science besides the obvious—the Freudian complexities of fighters, the tragedy, the disillusionment, chance, paradox, and irony. No other sport can boast of the human dynamics that boxing is overflowing with. It was a reminder that for every Muhammad Ali, Ray Leonard, and Floyd Mayweather, there are thousands of fighters who never get close to realizing their aspirations but are buoyed by that elusive shot at glory.

AARON S. BAYLEY
Toronto, Ontario

CHICO'S COMEBACK

Speaking of "Great Career Comebacks" (THE RING EXTRA, October 2005), how about Diego "Chico" Corrales? After his one-sided loss to Floyd Mayweather and his incarceration that followed, who thought he would not only be fighting at his pre-Mayweather level, but actually exceed it? Since his release, Corrales has had impressive wins over Joel Casamayor, Acelino Frietas, and Jose Luis Castillo. He is also the holder of THE RING lightweight championship belt, showing that his comeback is even more impressive than the first stage of his career.

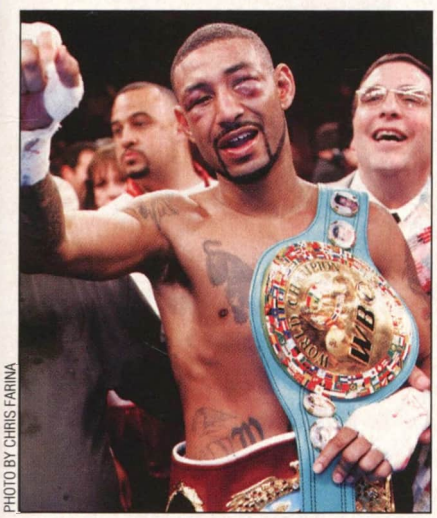


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

A bruised and battered Diego Corrales celebrates his amazing, up-from-the-floor TKO of Jose Luis Castillo. Reader John Davis points out that "Chico" not only made a comeback in that fight, but has also made a remarkable career comeback since losing to Floyd Mayweather and spending time in prison.

JOHN DAVIS
West Milford, NJ

BELT BACK

I keep reading about what a shame it is that James Toney tested positive for steroids. I also keep hearing people angry about the fact that John Ruiz got the WBA belt back, so here is a question for THE RING: If, hypothetically, a RING magazine champ loses via knockout, decision, or whatever, and the guy who wins was found to be on steroids, would THE RING give their belt back to the champ?

KYLE FRAME
Saint Marys, GA

[Editor's note: Regardless of whether or not THE RING agrees with a result, it will accept the official decision. In the Toney-Ruiz case, the official result was changed to a no-decision, which means that the title did not change hands. If, Ruiz had held THE RING championship belt going into the Toney fight, we would still recognize him as champion if the circumstances were the same.]

NO POLITICS, PLEASE

I love boxing and THE RING, which I read cover-to-cover every month. However, I am sick and tired of having to read Ivan Goldman's lame, biased, and boring political comments in my *boxing* magazine. Maybe Mr. Goldman should try another profession?

JOE KELLY
Pittsburgh, PA

LACY LOVER

After watching Jeff Lacy take apart Robin Reid in his latest and greatest performance, I can say that "Left Hook" is the future of the super middleweight division. Hopefully, we can see him face Joe Calzaghe to determine THE RING champ. With Jeff improving with every fight, he is becoming one of the stars of boxing and bringing excitement to a division that has been dead for a while. I think Lacy is a superstar in the making.

STEPHEN DAY
Dublin, Ireland

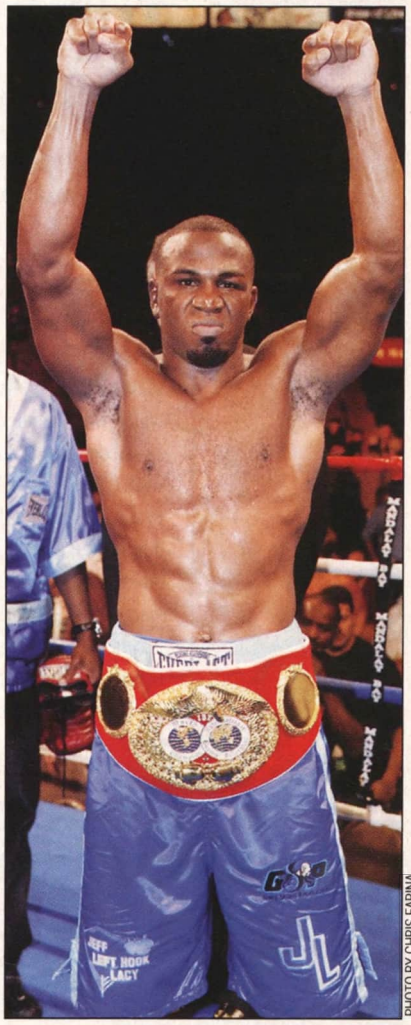


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Jeff Lacy already has the IBF super middleweight belt, but as reader Stephen Day points out, "Left Hook" will also gain THE RING belt if he is successful in his proposed bout with Joe Calzaghe, which will crown the first-ever true 168-pound world champion.

CRAZY COMMENT

I was wondering if O'Neil Bell's cousin was on your staff and wrote the comments for the "TV Fights Of The Month" in the October 2005 issue of THE RING EXTRA. I do not understand how such an absurd comment regarding Bell's fight with Dale Brown could appear in your otherwise great magazine. Maybe if points were added to Bell's tally for blocking punches with his face, you could come up with a scorecard where Bell won. Otherwise, it was clear to most people who saw the fight that Brown was the real victor.

DAVE CACCIATORE
Orlando, FL ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Joe Santoliquito

VITALI TAKES ON RAHMAN—AND SKEPTICS

Vitali Klitschko has been heavyweight champion since April 24, 2004, and all he's seemed to receive since then is grief. There's been doubts about whether or not he is a deserving heavyweight champion, since he stopped the underachieving **Corrie Sanders** for the title. There's been doubts about his lack of fights, with his only defense being a mismatch against the cowering **Danny Williams**. There were even doubts over the legitimacy of the bone spur injury that postponed a mandatory WBC title defense against **Hasim Rahman**.

Now it appears Klitschko will finally get into the ring—against Rahman—most likely on November 12 in Las Vegas at the Thomas and Mack Center. The fight will be on HBO Pay-Per-View and promoted by **Bob Arum**'s Top Rank, which won the purse bid over Don King Productions with a $12.1-million offer.

According to those around the 34-year-old Klitschko, the champion can't wait. "Vitali is the best heavyweight champion out there, and people for whatever reason either deny him that title or aren't willing to believe it, and I really don't know why," said **Shelly Finkel**, Klitschko's advisor. "He isn't avoiding other fighters, nor has he ever done that. He wanted to fight **Lennox Lewis**, he wanted to fight **Mike Tyson**. So the accusation that he's been avoiding people is ridiculous. He wanted this fight and it's going to happen. All you really need to notice is that there is no **Don King** involved with this."

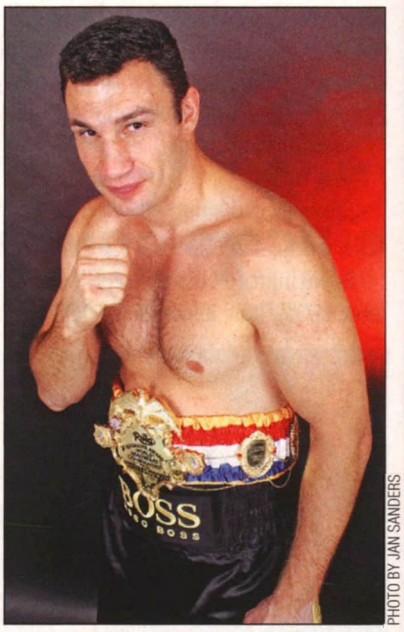


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Klitschko is ready to prove himself again

Right now, Klitschko and Rahman, rated number three by THE RING with a 41-5-1 (33) record, is the best fight possible in the moribund heavyweight division. But what may make it a hard sell is the fact that Klitschko, 35-2 (34), still hasn't caught on with the mainstream American sports fan and Rahman is coming off a mundane title elimination fight against **Monte Barrett** in August.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wright may provide fans with an early-December treat

LISTEN UP

Joe Calzaghe says he wants to be recognized as the best super middleweight on the planet. Well, here's his chance. **Jeff Lacy**, THE RING's number-three ranked super middleweight, will come to London, England, and take on Calzaghe, rated number one, on November 5, at the XL Centre, according to Lacy's promoter, **Gary Shaw**. The fight is slated for Showtime. The paperwork was already on the desk of **Frank Warren**, Calzaghe's promoter, Shaw said. After the fight, only eight of the 17 divisions will still have vacancies in the world champion position.

"I believe in Jeff Lacy and his fans have paid all along to see Jeff grow and mature, like they have in England with Calzaghe, to reach this point," Shaw said. "This is a big fight for Calzaghe. The opportunity to fight for THE RING championship belt is something you can't place a value on. Jeff will have beaten the best that there is at 168. I've conceded everything because that's how much faith I have in Jeff. It will be a great fight. The one problem with American fighters going over there, however, is that there is some hometown officiating. There are English officials that favor English fighters. I don't believe all U.K. officials think like that, but some do. I also know Joe throws a lot of punches, but he better be prepared to catch some coming back. I advise Joe Calzaghe to watch a lot of American baseball" … Shaw also confirmed that **Winky Wright** will fight again before the end of the year. Possible opponents include either a top junior middleweight, like **Ike Quartey**, or top-ranked middleweight **Felix Sturm**. As of press time, the date talked about was December 10, possibly in Texas. ■

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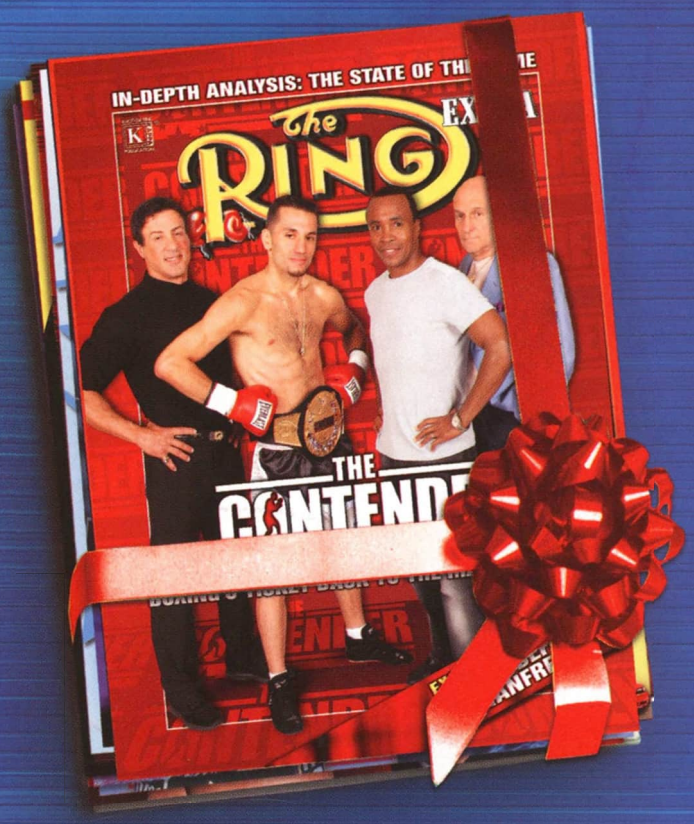

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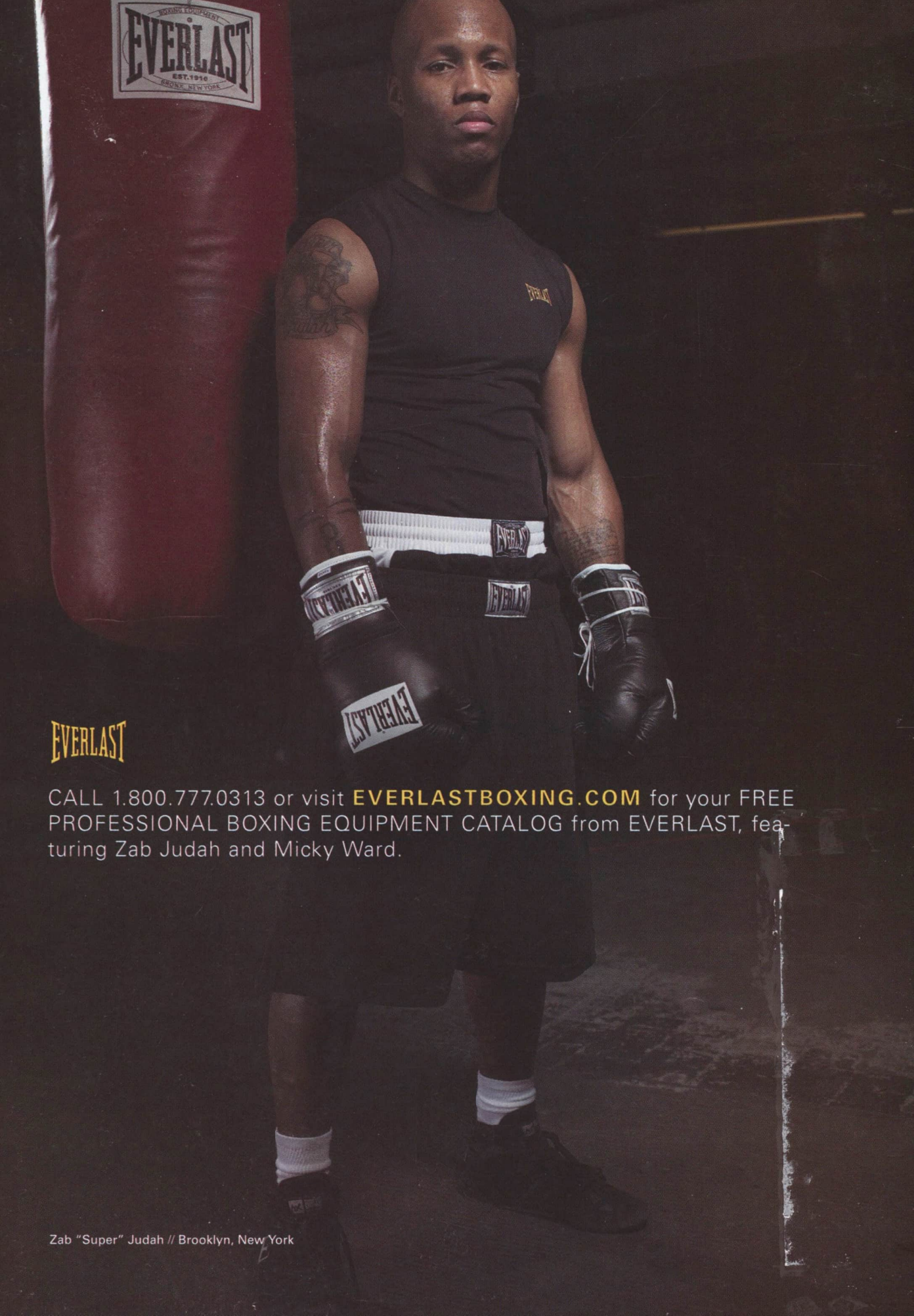
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